

P 523 / 344

spare Rib

35p

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will mean to you-
Thatcher & The Tories

Talking with
Tom Robinson

Greek Women
Growing Strong

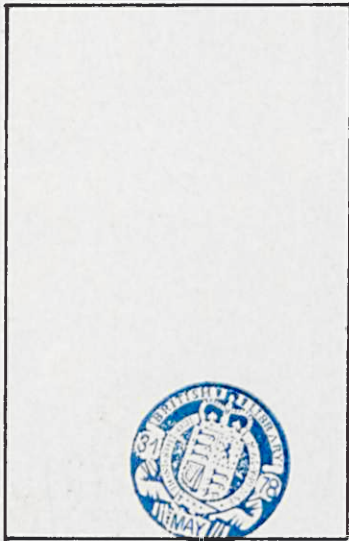
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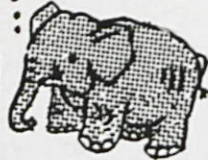
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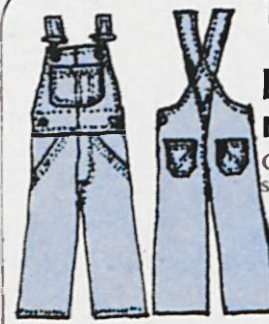
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of Jan Walbe
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June 1978



What life will be like for
women under the Tories...

See page 6.



A
new
life
stirring
within...

Page 43.

FEATURES

- 6 Thatcher — what is the snatcher up to?
- 14 Mexico — a blow to machismo
- 15 Greek Women on the move
- 19 Tom Robinson talks to *Spare Rib*
- 26 Alexandra Kollontai — the lonely revolutionary
- 32 Jobsharing: carrying the load together
- 43 Reproduction: taking back what's ours

FICTION

- 22 Five Women by Ann Oosthuizen (continued on page 42)

REVIEWS

- 36 Theatre New plays by Michelene Wandor — *Whores D'Oeuvres* and *Scissors*
- Books *Tearing the Veil* and *m/f*... Jane Austen's *Love and Freindship*... *For Colored girls who have considered suicide*...
- Film *The Turning Point* and *Looking for Mr Goodbar*
- TV A Woman's Place? BBC's "look behind the ideas of Women's liberation"
- Music Report on the first women's Jazz Festival... Blondie — *Plastic Letters*... Patti Smith — *Live*

REGULARS

- 4 Letters Secretaries, biology and mother knows best
- 10 Newshorts Noreen Winchester set free... South Oxford Nursery fights on... Canteen workers win equal pay... Liverpool women occupy a clothing factory — and a hostel for homeless women... and more...
- 24 Shortlist Things to do and read
- 29 Classifieds
- 34 Forum Letters on therapy and the National Women's Liberation Conference
- 42 Tooth and Nail food for fury
- 47 Subscriptions Happy Birthday 6 year old!

Spare Rib is produced collectively by Anny Brackx, Barbara Charles, Alison Fell, Susan Hemmings, Sue Hobbs, Laura Margolis, Jill Nicholls, Rosie Parker, Ruthie Petrie, Linda Phillips, Janie Prince, Amanda Sebestyen, Carole Spedding, Ruth Wallsgrove.

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Read on,
sisters...

Page 19.



PAT MOAN

Γυνεκες
απανο
και
ανδρες
κατο!!

See
σελιδα
15.

Send Letters to
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Please keep letters short so we can print a variety of opinions.

Please send your full name and address with the letter, so that we can reply and/or forward letters to you.

* indicates letters have been cut for reasons of space

Women boss too

Dear Spare Rib,

Good article on secretaries et al—but the writer forgot to mention that other women also try to keep any Sec. who wants to do anything more/better firmly in her place. Any ex-Sec. who admits she can type also gets problems in having typewritten work done for her.

Another thing—Secretaries are not only expected to get on with their boss but also the other women (no man is expected to 'get on well' with all those he comes into contact with, indeed some antagonism from other quarters is expected).

Having forsaken the typewriter, yours with writer's cramp, Daphne M Marler, London.

Not so dead-end

Dear Spare Rib,

Much as I was interested in your article 'Are You A Typewriter' (SR 69), having endured a secretarial course for nine months and wondering just that question, I was perturbed at the emphasis on the dead end nature of the job. Emotive quotes from personnel officers as "Let's face it, after you've been a secretary for more than two years, you're no good at being anything else. It's a support role and it breeds a support attitude" do not breed respect for the article. The quote implies a mindless person, not necessarily a mindless job. The word 'support' indicates a crutch for a weary boss to lean on; if this becomes the case, throw away the crutch and change jobs. Your article correctly states that there are innumerable secretarial jobs around.

For both the working class and middle class it does provide an element of security and the ability to be independent. Noticeably, more boys are realising its potential now. It still remains a quick, easy form of cash which provides less demoralisation than the unskilled jobs of underpaid barstaff and catering professions, where surely women are exploited more. There is plenty wrong with the secretarial profession and the quotes from Anna Coote and Laura King make this obvious. Representation through a union would be the ideal step, but maybe an approach with less of the hysterical "I am a mole, I live in my hole" would advance the cause further. Perhaps people (men too) would listen to us more if we could keep to the business-like language of Anna Coote and Laura King. Yours in sisterhood, Tessa Shaw, Reading University.

Jobs that don't exist

* Dear Spare Rib,

The secretaries article (SR 69) focused on the old 'one man/one secretary' set-up. It seems so much more common nowadays for the secretary to work for several people, very often one of them a woman... and this style of work is different from the 'husband and servile wife' type of relationship the article describes.

Some other aspects of the situation about unionisation are:

- a) Many secretaries are right-wing.
- b) Many (amazingly) still see union activity as something that factory women do and feel they will 'sink' to that level if they do it too.
- c) Because the work is privatised, very rarely are grievances collective. I may have masses of work and the woman at the next desk almost none, but because of it being, supposedly, confidential, we can't share it or be open about why we have so much to do.
- d) Most importantly, your bosses may be in the same union—and the same union meeting too! They may even on some occasions be left-wingers complaining about their situations! Can you imagine what it's like sitting in a meeting with someone mouthing off about their lousy working conditions and/or salary when, even though you like the person and think s/he's got a good case, you'd give your eye-teeth for their job, even for less pay and longer hours than they have! You could try saying "Half a mo" and describe the secs' situation but as you're used to being in an inferior/deferential position to practically everyone at the meeting anyway, well...

In so many secretarial jobs there is nothing—but nothing—to do all day. Not many workers have jobs that don't exist. I really agree we should work for a situation where all office-workers are 'self-servicing'. Also I think we should work for promotion from secretarial work, as in the BBC and some publishing firms. Just as in the police everyone (even the ones with degrees) has to go on the beat before they can opt to do the interesting stuff, so everybody in an office should start as an office-girl or boy, and after a few months of that consider getting into journalism or social work or accountancy or whatever, with, if necessary, paid secondment to train. Yours now in sisterhood, Avis Greenwell, Downham Market, Norfolk.

'Witch' a put-down

* Dear Sisters,

It's a pity that the otherwise excellent article on women's health in West Africa (SR 69) makes the distinction, albeit by the merest implication, between 'witch-doctors' in that continent and 'traditional healers' elsewhere. The article stresses the important role played by such people in Africa, yet despite the fact that

the offending term appears in quotes, it was, presumably, the inspiration behind the heading 'Witches and Midwives in Upper Volta'.

Although the word 'witch' has the approbation of a WLM informed by an enlightened reading of history, its use in connection with anything African has always been pejorative. To be avoided, I feel, as should be old maps (same article). Dahomey has been known as the People's Republic of Benin since 1975. Val Wilmer, London.

Not by biology alone

Dear Spare Rib/Sisters,

We would like to raise a matter which we see as a pernicious 'McCarthyism' which is being injected into the movement by some women. We are extremely angry at the vicious attack that appears to be being initiated against those women within the movement who have undergone sex change operations.

The outbursts against these women that have occurred at various feminist meetings, emanate straight from a biological and naturalist conception of 'woman'. To accept that those women who have undergone sex change operations are 'not women' is the adoption of exactly the kind of sex stereotypes which the feminist movement firmly reject. A new kind of orthodoxy is being advocated which refuses to acknowledge the existence of women who do not conform to a specific definition based on biology.

But 'women' and 'men' are not just biological entities. 'Woman' and 'man' are social, not biological categories. Our social identities are formed by the relation of our biology to a particular set of social relations, not by our biology alone. If your biology is altered so too is your place in social relations. To draw an analogy; it is not the colour of our skin alone which determines our attitudes and our place in society—'whiteness and blackness' are products of a system that attaches a certain significance and difference to the colour of skin.

We feel strongly about this which is why we are writing to Spare Rib. It seems to us that such attitudes to transsexual women are but part of a single mechanism by which some women in the movement would seek to separate 'real' feminists from other feminists. Yet this distinction turns out to be based on the very ideology which is crucial to the perpetuation of patriarchy—the notion that there is such a thing as a 'Real Woman', and that this Real Woman is biologically definable. But far from attacking male supremacy at its roots, the aim of "reclaiming our female experience, our affinities, our biology..." (report back SR 69 on Revolutionary Feminist Conference) could not

be better calculated to reinforce the patriarchy. Since when have we been prepared to base our feminism on the very criteria which are used against us by the patriarchy to define 'true Femininity'?

Yours in Sisterhood, Wendy P Clark, Margaret L Page and others, London.

Mother knows best?

* Dear Sisters,

Sometimes I strongly doubt whether women are prepared to share childcare at all and I also wonder whether mothers will ever forfeit the right (and I think it is felt as a right) to have an exclusive relationship with their child. I speak as a woman without children who responds very much to the criticisms Marsha levels against men involved in childcare (SR 67). I feel a judgmental attitude from mothers and find it oppressive and hurtful. It's as if mothers always know 'best' because of their implicit relationship with their kids. Where does this leave childless women and men? I might not be guilty of such traits as not delving "deeper into feelings" or "forgetting the sort of nurturing and encouragement children need" as men are but I'm still prey to an attitude that reads a bit like "Oh, she doesn't understand—she hasn't kids of her own!"

Whenever I read of childcare I become aware of my relationship with my mother and her impact on me. Women/mothers have conditioned their male children too, into patterns of behaviour, don't let's forget that. Women must change too in the way they relate to kids for a 'new' generation of people. Yours in sisterhood, Claire Betti, London.

Patronising 'kids'

Dear Spare Rib,

I hate hearing boys call girls 'dolly birds' and 'birds'. A dolly is a lifeless imitation human being and a bird is a small feathery creature with a very small brain. Some of my friends are pleased and flattered when boys call them 'birds' or 'dolls' but I think what the boys are really saying is that the girls are less important than they are.

I hate hearing feminists call us young people 'kids'—a kid is a small stupid animal with a bleating voice and it isn't very bright. It is true that many children and young people do not mind being called 'kids' but then many girls do not mind being called 'birds'. I think that what the feminists (and others) are really saying is that young people and children are less important than they (feminists and adults) are.

PS I am a feminist—but I am not a 'kid', tho' a teenager! Love, Peggy Gilbert, Ely, Cambridgeshire.

Powerful rape play

* Dear Spare Rib,
I recently went to see 'She Asked For It', a play about rape performed by Counteract. I want to say how powerful and thought-provoking it is. I've discussed rape and violence against women on many occasions, but I still found myself quite upset, shocked, angry and at times very moved. The discussion afterwards, which was equally as long as the play itself, brought out some interesting points.

It is difficult to produce a political play without either patronising the audience or being very dogmatic, and this can lead to being simplistic. Even so, I feel they made their points: that rape is the logical result of everyday male/female relations, that every man is a potential rapist and that while all women are viewed as the property of all men, then violence against women in all its forms will continue.

I would therefore like to take up Penny Allen in her review of the play (SR 69). She says, "It is probably unfair to criticise this play strictly as drama as Counteract are performing it often as part of an education programme." Are we then to assume that there is no relationship between education and drama? Surely there are many ways of expressing feminist and political ideology. It doesn't have to be confined to a purely academic milieu, and the effectiveness of radical theatre in these areas has been proved time and again.

I also think it is quite wrong of SR to print a statement from the Scarlet Women Theatre Group under the heading of reviews. By all means print their statement, but make it quite clear that it is a statement about leaving that it is a statement about leaving Counteract and not a review of an actual play. Why didn't you approach Counteract for a reply? It isn't as if SR simply waits for contributions—you often take the initiative to do research yourselves.

Jill Barnett,
Manchester.
See Letters SR 70 for Counteract's reply.

In Defence of Tom

* Dear Spare Rib,
I was amazed and disappointed on reading your review of *Rising Free* by the Tom Robinson Band (SR 69). I disagree totally with your opinions. Look, the music world is clearly sexist, and when a group like TRB comes up with lyrics and themes which we support wholeheartedly, then why put him down?

I've been to several concerts to see a wide range of bands, from Matraiding, Clash, Genesis—but at none of these did the audience feel as excited, supportive (to my politics) or indeed revolutionary. Tom sang with aggression and sincerity leaving those in the audience who were male chauvinists and racists fairly gutted with a

greater insight and understanding of oppression.

Please realise that there aren't many people on our side. I believe Tom is, so don't fuck him off with any more discouraging reviews—he's doing us a good job! Love and sisterhood,
Mich Sanderson,
Kendray, nr Barnsley,
S Yorkshire.

More of Tom on page 19...

No Pill Conspiracy

* Dear Spare Rib,
I have just two criticisms of Jill Rakusen's article (SR 68). 1) She emphasises the bad side of the Pill. Most women who use the Pill get away with it, without major or minor side effects. To these women, including myself, the Pill is an unequivocal blessing, allowing them to avoid pregnancy with certainty and without the mess of barrier methods or the discomfort and heavy periods that go with IUDs. A lot of women use the Pill for short periods during their 20s and early 30s to space out children, and for them the risks are probably much less. Life is full of risks to be balanced against advantages, and I for one am prepared to take a certain amount of risk for the convenience of the Pill.

2) The feeling put across in the conclusion to the article is that there has been a conspiracy to encourage women to take the Pill regardless of risks. This 'conspiracy theory' pervades a lot of writing in SR about medicine. I don't defend the attitudes of the majority of the medical profession, being a female member of it, oppressed and frustrated by its monolithic stupidity at times, but I feel most doctors and health policy makers are either complacent and unconcerned (occasionally to the extent of malpractice), or concerned well-meaning people within the framework of their middle class male sexist conservative outlooks! This does not mean they should not be attacked but to imply that the mistakes and misdemeanours of the doctors, the health politicians, and the drug companies are within the context of a collective consciousness/conspiracy is to misunderstand the problem. What we are up against is unconsciousness, unthinking tacit acceptance of the values of our capitalist, sexist society, and 'conspiracy theory' statements from the women's movement are more likely to alienate neutral concerned doctors than improve the situation. Nothing is as simple as that.

Yours in sisterhood,
Gail Young,
Kirkcubright,
Scotland.

Problems with Depo Provera

Dear Spare Rib,
Your article on the use of Depo Provera in the East End (SR 69)

is inaccurate, particularly in the reference to the Tower Hamlets Day Care Abortion Service (DCAS).

Lyn Harne says, "It is disturbing that DP is sometimes offered alongside abortion." I find it disturbing that Lyn has not at any time made contact with those of us running the service; had she done so she would have known that the figure '2% for 1976' did not relate to the DCAS. The service did not start until July 1977!

Peter Huntingford and I have recently completed figures for an evaluation of the first six months of the service and, of some 300 women seen, only one was given DP. You may think that one was too many and we would agree. The fact is, the person in question was very insistent that she be given it and no amount of advice would deter her. Indeed, she kicked up quite a shindig when she thought she was to be discharged without the injection.

As co-ordinator of the service, it is my responsibility to obtain literature on contraceptive methods and at no time have I ordered or been asked to order a leaflet on DP. The DCAS cannot be held responsible for the Family Planning Services in the East End.

Of the three sessional doctors working with the DCAS on a regular basis only one would offer DP as an alternative and it is not for the rest of us to dictate. Feminist doctors are thin on the ground and the few that exist need your support!

It is a great pity that you saw fit to go into print before contacting either Peter Huntingford or myself. After 2½ years of struggle by him your continued support and co-operation would have been more appropriate. What are you trying to achieve? Do you want DP withdrawn or the DCAS closed down—believe me, the latter would be the first to go!

Finally, Peter Huntingford has always given information freely and candidly to all who have asked for it and it was made clear at the outset that observers would be welcome. Should anyone wish to visit the service please ring me as appointments are necessary to avoid congestion and any embarrassment to the women.

Sincerely,
Hilda Bartle, Administrator,
Tower Hamlets Day Care
Abortion Service.
(01-980 4855 ext 283)

East London Women's
Health group replies:
We are distressed by the misunderstanding caused by our article on DP. It was not intended to attack the DCAS which we strongly appreciate.

The figures quoted were given to the group by Peter Huntingford, but we apologise for misinterpreting them as figures for the clinic and not for the London Hospital as a

We thought it would be helpful to publish the Women's Liberation Movement's demands as they now stand. The first 4 were agreed in 1970, the next 2 added in 1974 and the 7th added at this year's national conference, when the 6th demand was split into two—the first half is now a preamble.

The Women's Liberation Movement asserts a woman's right to define her own sexuality and demands:

- 1 Equal pay for equal work
- 2 Equal opportunities and equal education
- 3 Free contraception and abortion on demand
- 4 Free community-controlled child care
- 5 Legal and financial independence for women
- 6 An end to discrimination against lesbians
- 7 Freedom for all women from intimidation by the threat or use of violence or sexual coercion, regardless of marital status. An end to the laws, assumptions and institutions that perpetuate male dominance and men's aggression towards women.

Some women thought we should abolish the demands altogether because there is no point making demands of the patriarchal state. Others felt we should keep the demands as an outline statement of what we stand for. It was agreed that we'd discuss this locally and bring it up at next year's conference (which so far no group has offered to take on.)

See Forum, page 34.

whole. The leaflets mentioned referred to the FPA clinics not the DCAS.

We know that more than one doctor working at the DCAS has recommended DP, and our intention was to show the acceptability of DP to doctors. We cannot accept that the use of DP is reconcilable with feminist principles.

In Mary Michaels' poem 'Evening' (SR 70) we incorrectly repeated the line "her face red-brown with the just-set sun" at the end. We apologise to Mary.

In SR 60, we published an anonymous article called 'Changing With My Daughter'. A reader has asked us to point out that the section of the article which refers to the child's third to eighth years might be read as suggesting that the child was already eight when the first couple relationship ended, whereas she was six, and we are sorry for any confusion this has caused.

Barbara Charles looks at

THATCHER & THE TORIES

& WHAT WE'RE IN FOR...

"The aim of our education policy would be to restore the balance between the pursuit of excellence and the widening of opportunity", so runs the pamphlet *The Right Approach — a statement of Conservative aims*. In its pursuit of excellence our society has thrown up Margaret Thatcher, who doesn't miss too many opportunities to tell us that she is one of those individuals who's excelled through her own talents, which have been recognised in our 'free' society. She was one of those exceptional women who went to Oxford and later in life, as Minister of Education, refused to implement Comprehensive school education, that helps a few more working-class children get into higher education.

Thatcher believes the idea of equality to be the greatest disincentive to hard work since the Garden of Eden. It's not a matter of equality, but recruiting the 'right' people to maintain the elite structure at the top. Thatcher's position as leader of the Tory party doesn't, in itself, represent any change in attitudes towards women, there've always been the exceptional ones, the token women at the top, who haven't represented any threat to male bastions. Thatcher has never said anything about the problems she's had as a woman, raising a family, having to make restrictive choices etc. Being exceptional (and well-off), she hasn't had any problems! She speaks to us only as a Tory.

THE ECONOMICS

In the 1950's and 60's politicians on both sides accepted the notion that inequalities should be modified by expanding the welfare state and that this would entail large amounts of government expenditure, financed through taxation—with economic growth sustaining all of this. However, by the mid 60s investment in manufacturing was rapidly falling, by 1966 unemployment was over half a million and the rate of inflation was rising. A slump had arrived.

A humanitarian economist of the

1930's, Keynes, didn't believe that the free market was an efficient instrument for allocating resources and preventing long periods of mass unemployment. So, put simply, he suggested that in a slump the government had to revive the economy by injecting vast sums of money into it and creating more jobs.

Today this is no longer a fashionable idea and the 'in' economics is that of Milton Friedman, an economist of the Chicago school. He believes that private enterprise should have an absolutely free hand, prices should fluctuate freely in accordance with the laws of competition and that inflation is the direct result of monetary expansion and can only be eliminated by a drastic reduction of government spending. The Tories have lapped this up. *The Right Approach* contains screeds on the need to "curb the growing appetite of the public sector" and for less government intervention and "proper control of the money supply".

Friedman is an unofficial adviser to the Chilean economists that have been applying his model since the fascist coup that overthrew Allende. The results will indicate something of what we're in for with Thatcher. Although the Chilean government deficit was reduced by half between April and December 1975, his prediction on the rise in unemployment, as a result of his monetary policies, was wrong—it rose by six times the amount he'd predicted—before the coup it was 3.1%, by December 1975 it was 18.7% and by July 1976 a quarter of the Chilean population was unemployed. Our Welfare State employs millions of people,

especially women. Apart from robbing us of services we need, the cuts in government expenditure have, so far, robbed thousands of their jobs—and Thatcher believes these services to be 'over-manned'.

PRICES & WAGES

All politicians try to appeal to women as housewives and shoppers—they have to do the budgeting and trundle from shop to shop, pram and all, looking for bargains. Thatcher tells us, "The democracy of the ballot box is only one form of democracy. In a truly free society it must be reinforced by the democracy of the market, in which people can cast their vote not once every four years but every day, as they went about their daily business spending or saving their own money." This is an excellent example of her populist rhetoric—we're all in the same boat as we joggle along to the shops, however

in controlling the unions- "they aren't the government of this country"—she's talked about referendums to decide the fate of striking workers. Just in the shadows of Tory policy is always the threat of bringing in troops as a blackleg labour force, to break strikes (a favourite policy of Churchill's). How have women tried to make The Equal Pay Act mean something and stopped the use of grading schemes that dodge the Act? By striking, for example, Tricos and Magnavox (see SR 51, 53, 56).

Thatcher isn't quite in the same mould as her predecessors. You can't get people to accept huge drops in their standards of living and high unemployment without giving the economics a strong ideological backing and Thatcher has excelled on this score, moving herself and the Tories several enormous goosesteps to the right.

"SELF-HELP"?

Firstly, she's resurrected an old nineteenth century word, self-help. This means (unlike our use of it in the Women's Liberation Movement) that since the National Health Service, schools, council houses and other social services are being run down, most people are going to have to pay a hell of a lot more to look after themselves and their children. The clock is put back and 'welfare' becomes nasty—a true patriot will kill himself to get work and support his family on low wages, "we believe that the individual citizen should have more encouragement to provide for his own future, that it should always pay to work, that a sound family life lies at the heart of a healthy society". * Where are women in a healthy society? You've guessed, in the heart of the kitchen proving how adequate they are by meeting family needs with hardly two pennies to rub together!

This self-help ideology and the reality of even harsher cuts in government expenditure will fall heavily on women, not only as employees, but as consumers, because it's mainly women who take care of children and old people; when services are cut, they have to cope in the home. In October 1977, Patrick Jenkin, shadow spokesman on Health, told a Conservative Medical Symposium that he wanted dearer prescriptions, more private beds—this would reduce the number of beds available for those of us who can't afford to be private patients—and charges for hospital patients. The Conservative Medical Society, in its evidence to the Royal Commission on the NHS last year, said "we believe that the introduction of a system where the consumer i.e. patient, begins to appreciate the relationship between payment and service, will tend to contain demand and improve the service" Precisely, the idea is to "contain demand" and get women to do the job for nothing.

**'The Right Approach' — Conservative Central office 1976*

Instead of leaving their children or relatives in hospital for a few days after an operation, mothers, not being able to afford the 'hotel' charges, will have to take them home and nurse them, possibly losing their jobs or wages. For some women, staying in hospital after they've had a baby is a short period of rest away from their household responsibilities—under the Tories this is going to be a costly rest. While Thatcher doesn't oppose abortion, her policies do. Hospital closures and other NHS cuts make it harder for women to get abortions on the NHS. Even with favourable legislation, cuts mean that abortion remains a luxury only well-off women can afford.

HOUSING

The Labour party has been cutting public expenditure and implementing Tory policies, but if elected, the Tories will push these policies more ruthlessly and cover even wider areas. Thatcher tells us that our dream is to own a house of our own and not live in a state subsidised one. In May 1977 the Tories took control of the Greater London Council and its leader, Horace (estate agent, property developer) Cutler, promised "the sale of the century". This means that 70,000 council houses are to be offered for sale to GLC tenants, hundreds of newly completed houses will be sold, not allocated to the letting pool and others, as they become vacant, will be offered for sale. What about all the people on the long waiting lists (in 1976 1,146,753 families were on these lists in England)? Can all these people afford to buy a house? I doubt it—in 1976 a Child Poverty Action Group survey reckoned that about 13 million people in Britain were in poverty ie living on or below Supplementary Benefit or only 40% above it. It would be no consolation to a battered wife, who'd been hoping to rent a safe council home of her own, to be told she could buy a council house. Who'd give her the money? The Social Security? Could she save up a deposit working in a low-paid occupation? Her only hope is to rent a council home and the same goes for unsupported mothers, newly married couples and families living on low incomes.

There's such a shortage of houses and flats to rent, that many young women, wanting to get away from their parents, are driven into early marriage and motherhood in the hope of getting a council house. The council should make properties available for single people—but there's no hope of that if it's reducing the letting pool. Tories talk about "the squandering of public funds on council houses" and appeal to those who've managed to save and buy a house of their own. They don't say anything about the cost incurred by the government in tax relief on mortgages—between 1976 and 77 this was £1,240 million, nearly as much as the cost of council house subsidies. Also the Tories don't intend to give the tenants of private absentee landlords the right to buy the houses they're in.

When we get there we find that Lords Sainsbury, Tesco etc, can cast their votes a million times over. Faced with big enterprises like Nestles and General Food the housewife is powerless—these companies made vast profits by hoarding coffee to increase the prices. The Labour Party, with Tory support, has cut £160 million off food subsidies that kept the prices of butter, milk, bread etc, down and have said, again with Tory support, that prices should rise to Common Market levels. Housewives have experienced the results of letting market mechanisms determine the price of food (a la Friedman)—Lurpak butter 25p a pound in 1973 and 74p a pound in 1977, a loaf of bread up from 13p to 25½p in the same period . . . the list is endless.

Meanwhile wages have been kept down by the Social Contract. Although the Tories want to abolish this, it doesn't mean giving unions more power to demand wage increases. Thatcher believes

THE SCAPEGOATS

Another vital ingredient in the Tory Righter than ever ideology, is the creation of scapegoats—ideas and people that can be spat on and blamed for all our ills. Thatcher's vehement anti-socialist speeches are part of the scapegoating. According to her, it's Labour governments that have created a slump by borrowing vast sums of money, creating a huge debt, and mercilessly over-taxing us, in their nightmarish pursuit of equality and redistribution of wealth—she believes the Labour party to be the reds under whatever it is we can now afford to sleep on! Also, scapegoats are needed to divide and rule us. "Few manual workers are likely to be happy about a situation where they could get more by not working"—the Tories are trying to woo the better-off skilled manual worker, who, afraid of losing his job in these hard times, might be persuaded to see the unemployed and one-parent families as enemies, scrounging on the state and his taxes.

What are the implications for women? The Tories say that 'fraud and abuse' should be rooted out and the numbers of special Social Security investigators increased—this means making women dependent on the men they're having a relationship with, by trying to get evidence to support the Cohabitation rule. It's likely that quite a few women do work and claim Supplementary Benefit—that's because they can't look after themselves and their children on the pittance they get and if they could find a nursery for their kids and go out to work, they're likely to get jobs in those little enterprises that Thatcher's just itching to help—the sweat shops characterised by no union organisation, low pay, long hours, like Grunwicks, where women were getting £18 for a 40 hour week. No equal pay in these ghettos, because there aren't any men doing the same work to make a comparison.

One might have hoped from a woman in power some recognition of the need for women to be financially independent of men. No such thing from Thatcher. The Tories intend to introduce a tax credit scheme "to increase the incentive to earn more instead of relying on the state"; since the credits will be paid through wages, for women who work in the home and don't get an income this just reinforces the notion that a man is responsible for housing, clothing, feeding his family. A lot of women know that the man isn't necessarily 'responsible', he's the one that gets the pay packet but there's nothing to make him hand it over.

RACISM- EXPLOITING CONFUSION

Finally, but not least to the scapegoat ideology, Thatcher has isolated immigrants and by implication all black people living here, as another cause of the nation's problems. In her infamous Granada TV broadcast in January, she claimed that immigration was between 45,000 and 50,000 a year, emotively telling us that her very own home town had a population of 25,000 and immigration meant two new towns a year. She's playing the numbers game and the liberal press have fallen into the trap, by correcting her statistics and saying that in the year ending June 1977, 41 000 more people left the UK than arrived from other countries. But Thatcher doesn't care about being caught out like that, because it's fear and ignorance she's trying to exploit, by focusing on black immigrants.

For most of us things like profits and speculation aren't tangibles, we can't really conceive the scale on which we are being exploited by the faceless big corporations. Our bosses haven't been investing in home industries because they've found that they get even bigger profits through property speculation, through gambling on the international money market and by opening up new plants and subsidiaries in poorer countries where labour is very cheap. They have caused a slump by trying to expand their profits. Thatcher talks about our poor profitless industries—strange how General Electric Company, for example, made £77 million profit before tax, in 1973, employing 181,000 and in 1976 made £207 million but with only 166,000 workers—remember that when industrialists do invest in new capital goods, they look for labour saving machinery. Thatcher says that crippling taxes have made industry unprofitable—but look at government revenue between 1976 and 1977, 46.8% was from personal income tax and national insurance contributions, but only 4.6% from taxes paid on company profits.

But facts and figures are usually manipulated to conceal what's really happening and distorted to confuse us. Thatcher's racism tries to exploit our confusion. She told us that "every country can take small minorities and in many ways they add to the richness and variety of this country. The moment the minority threatens to become a big one, people are frightened." What she meant was that she didn't mind people eating curries but went a whiter shade of pale at the sight of miners and other skilled and unskilled workers joining the Asian women picketing Grunwicks and swamping the streets demanding reinstatement of sacked workers and union recognition. Thatcher goes on about the

freedom of the individual and her hatred of the closed shop, but says nothing about the right of workers, mostly women, in Grunwick-type businesses, to join a union and protect themselves.

The Tories were delighted by the recent report of the Commons Select committee on Immigration, that recommended everything they already had in mind—a new quota system for immigrants from the Indian Subcontinent, with priority given to wives and children under 12 years—yes, under 12, so what does a woman do, after she's been waiting years to join her husband, when she's got a child aged 7 and another 13? If any group can understand the horrors of racist proposals like this, it should be women, who struggle hard to keep their families together in difficult times. The report also suggests stringent quotas for admitting catering and domestic workers and auxiliary nurses on work permits—mostly women whose labour was needed before but now their labour is expendable, like that of all women, of whatever colour; we're the first to go when there are redundancies, because of that worn-out myth that we earn the pin money.

Thatcher's ideology is not that different to that of the National Front and that's why, as a member of an established, respectable party, she's given credence to their divisive, racist rhetoric. When bosses and their politicians have to get us to accept massive drops in our standards of living, they try to unite us under one nationalistic banner, telling us that there are no class differences. That's why they go on about encouraging small businesses, appealing to us as a 'nation of shopkeepers'—they're really talking about perfect competition, which has never existed; the natural law of capitalist development and the market mechanism is that one firm eats another up and so on, till you end up with what we've got today, monopolies and multi-national corporations.

When people don't readily accept hardship then the state becomes more forceful about its ideology—it becomes a fascist one in the real sense—and that's the direction Thatcher is taking her party. The only things she's not going to cut down on, in fact spend more on, are the police and the military. Where are women in such a state? Back home breeding, with no choice and little money with which to raise a family.

THE LAST WORD

What Thatcher really has to say about our problems is best summed up by the following incident. During a visit she made to Crossleys carpet factory in Halifax, she stopped and told a woman what lovely carpets they were all making. The woman replied "But they're very expensive for us working people." Thatcher, patting her hand, said "We're all working people and it's very expensive for all of us." * In other words, bullshit!

*'Contact Brief' - Conservative contact programme June/July 1976 *Guardian 13/2/78

MNO PQ RST

ABCDEFGHIJKL

In September, Issue 75
We hope to feature some articles on

SCHOOL AND SEXISM

We're interested in hearing from readers on how they cope with sexism in the educative system, especially dealing with straight infant/junior schools, and any experiences with "Women's studies"

Ideas as soon as possible to:

Susan Hemmings,
Spare Rib,
27 Clerkenwell Close,
London EC1 R0AT.

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TALES I TELL MY MOTHER

by Zoe Fairbairns, Sara Maitland, Valerie Miner, Michele Roberts and Michelene Wandor.

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LIVERPOOL WOMEN OCCUPY! a homeless Q's hostel...

St Monica's, a hostel for homeless women near the centre of Liverpool, was occupied at midnight on April 30 by some women who worked there and other supporters. The hostel, owned by the Church, was due for formal closure on May 1.

For some time the intake had been run down by the Church who, claiming they had no money to keep it open, had offered it to the Housing Department. But they wanted to turn it into self-contained flats for single men and women.

Over the past year, St Monica's had provided a temporary home for 159 single women and 110 mothers with 150 children. Women came for many reasons — girls chucked out by their families because they were pregnant, others who'd been in care all their lives, women thrown out or battered by the men they lived with.

St Monica's was certainly no home from home but other options

were bad and usually full anyway. Provision for women and children in Liverpool is desperate. Hostel workers and local feminists weren't going to stand by and let it get worse.

The first objective was to get homeless women back into the hostel. Calling themselves the Homeless Action Committee, the occupiers have been trying to publicise that space is available. Four ex-residents have now moved back, with one child. Social services have put out a verbal directive that women are not to be sent to St Monica's, though the committee have managed to persuade some social workers to ignore this.

The phone and gas have been cut off, and the first woman trying to claim social security was told she couldn't as it was an illegal occupation. If you can help in any way, contact St Monica's, 13 Croxteth Rd, Liverpool 8. O

militant action. Occupation isn't easy particularly if you're a married woman with children. Husbands who may themselves be union activists are often less sympathetic when it's 'the wife' who is fighting the boss.

One woman explained: "My husband isn't happy with me being out all the time. The housework and everything is getting on top of me, you come out here first thing in the morning then you have to rush back, get the shopping and the tea. My husband said to me the other day 'I won't stop you but don't come complaining to me that you're tired or don't feel well because I won't have a bit of sympathy — you're doing this on your own.'" Despite this lack of support she's played a major role in the occupation.

The single women and men working at FD have managed after some difficulties to get £14 a week dole money, but married women are forced to depend on their husbands' wages.

The occupation has had a big effect on them all. One woman

Dire straits

The Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital for women is on the brink of annihilation. Although in February the Area Health Authority voted for it to stay, the Regional Health Authority met on April 24 and decided it was "an expensive luxury" and "redundant".

They argued that as women are now being taken in equally to medical schools, there is no need for a special women's hospital. One idiot actually said he'd taken the precaution of asking his wife that morning and she agreed it was unnecessary. So that proves it?!

The huge campaign to save the EGA feels that women are in no way equal in the medical profession — there are only ten consultant women surgeons in Britain, and two of them work at the EGA. They feel that everyone has a right to be treated by a person of their own sex and that the need is desperate for a hospital concentrating on women's particular health needs and developing research.

Brushing aside these arguments, the RHA decided to recommend to the Secretary of State that the hospital be closed as soon as possible. The next day the 150 staff voted unanimously to continue the work in they've been running for 18 months. Geared up for a fight, they await Ennals' final decision. A Hounslow-style raid (see SR 65) would be tricky while EGA consultants still support the occupation because the authorities would have to discharge patients out of their care — which goes against medical etiquette. O

For details of support needed see Shortlist

...a fashion factory



A break during the occupation at FD Clothing Centre, Knowsley

Although over 7,000 workers have been made redundant in Liverpool since the beginning of 1978, it has taken a small workforce of 200, nearly all women, to show that job loss can and must be resisted. The factory is FD Clothing Centre in Knowsley which has been open for only 18 months. It is owned by a Swiss multinational, Starlux, and 40% of the £400,000 worth of machinery was paid for with government grants. Having taken advan-

tage of this aid, the company has now decided to close down the plant, putting it into liquidation.

On March 20 the workers there decided unanimously to occupy and since then have been considering various ways of continuing production and keeping their jobs. Though they have thought of forming a workers' cooperative or getting a government grant, mainly they've concentrated on finding a buyer.

The women who work at FD have had little or no experience of

who's been going round factories asking for backing said: "I've walked into rooms full of men and thought 'how can I speak to a group of men like that'. I've been quivering but decided I'm not letting anyone get one over on me and I've done it."

The women are determined to stick it out — as one said, "We were shocked into doing it, but now it's a matter of principle." O

Eileen Kelly, Liverpool Women's Action Group

Any contributions to FD Centre
Randells Road, Knowsley
Industrial Estate, Knowsley.

Spray away

Diane Potter and Maria Schween were arrested on April 12 for spray painting and putting stickers on various offensive posters (such as for *The Stud* and *Emmanuelle*) in Euston Tube Station, London. We picketed and gave out leaflets in front of the court at their trial; inside Maria had time to read out part of a statement pointing out the connections between sexist images in adverts and violence against women. But the magistrate cheerfully fined Diane a total of £65 and Maria £12.50 anyway. As the leaflet asked, "How come film distributors, advertising agencies, London Transport and other purveyors of porn have the right to plaster our environment with their caricatures of women and to prosecute any of us who dares to protest?" O

Now go to top of page.

Some joke

On May Day the North Staffs Trades Council organised a procession, rally and dance with a 'personality' (read beauty) contest. We considered entering en masse as a protest; in the morning we were told we should simply turn up with union cards, but by the afternoon were informed that no further entries would be accepted. We asked if men could enter — they have 'personalities' too, don't they? — and were told they could have, but unfortunately entries were now closed. . . So we decided to hand out leaflets to people attending the dance. Some Trades Council members told us they had opposed the plan to hold the contest; others were sufficiently bothered by us to get into long discussions, including the President who informed us that "Democracy is doing as you're told".

The report in the local paper suggested that we were "in an ugly mood" — in fact, far from attacking people we had tried to reason with them and point out the inconsistency of a Trades Council treating women trade unionists in this way while claiming to stand for women's rights.

Earlier in the day we had been assured that the contest was a way of involving women in the unions — later it was admitted to be "just a bit of fun". Hopefully it's one piece of fun that won't be repeated next year. O

N. Staffs Women's Action Group

Media action

"The journalist's job is to report life and events around him/her — not to jump on every radical crusade and campaign that catches his/her fancy", replied North London Weekly Herald Editor to a protest from journalists on the paper about his coverage of a beauty contest which they described as fostering the view "that women are mere bodies . . . with little to contribute to society".

He refused to publish their letter disassociating themselves from the article but, when members of the Haringay Women's Group picketed the offices demanding an apology, he remembered to uphold the concept of a 'free press' by printing their statement. However, he still had the last word: "Delighted to publish your views ladies but sorry, no apology."

Members of the Maureen Colquhoun Action Committee had rather more success when they picketed the Daily Express in protest against an article by Jean Rook on the subject of Colquhoun's sexuality. The editor offered right of reply in the form of an article by them, published the following week. O



Noreen Winchester

Noreen Winchester is free

Noreen Winchester was set free on April 21, on the eve of a rally called in her support. She'd been in prison since August 1976, convicted of killing her father who had been raping her for years. Refused leave to appeal, she was granted a royal pardon despite a counter-campaign by some members of her family. She then rushed off to Lancashire with Audrey Middleton, who had been pushing hard for her release. Noreen, who now plans to live in Belfast with Audrey, writes:

I want to thank *Spare Rib* for asking readers to keep quiet about my case last autumn. That is what I wanted then because I thought that publicity might hurt my younger brothers and sisters. But the whole story had to come out at the appeal and I'm glad now that it did. I am also glad that I've since had the chance to tell people in my own words what happened. It was terrible not being able to speak at the trial and only having two visits during my first year in prison. Everything changed after Audrey Middleton and Sarah Nelson visited me last September, and Audrey's visits every Wednesday afterwards kept me going. The main difference in the way I was treated then was that my opinions on everything were considered important. I started to feel like a real person instead of a bit of rubbish. Before, no-one bothered to ask me what I thought.

I have just seen *SR 70*, asking people to support the campaign for my release. I have also heard about the torchlight processions and rallies that were planned. My thanks to everyone involved. It's my turn

now to help other women.

I have just spent the weekend at the National Women's Aid Federation conference in Cardiff and I realise now that the only unusual thing about my situation was the way I escaped from it. It is now clear to me that it is not only in Northern Ireland that a man can do what he likes to his wife and children as long as he does it within the home — I have now met English and Welsh women and children who have also suffered. I think it is terrible that this is allowed to go on. Neighbours don't want to get involved and some social workers and police officers are no better. I want to do all I can to help other people who are suffering like we did, but more than that I want to help change things so that it is not allowed to happen at all.

The worst thing about my situation was not being able to tell anyone about it. It was not only that my father threatened to kill any of the family who talked, but also the fear that no-one would believe us if we did. I hope that my case will start people talking publicly about the rape of girls by their fathers and that in future girls will know where to go for help, knowing that they will be believed. I don't think I

would have known what the word 'incest' meant, but when I grew older I did understand what rape was. I think it should be talked about in schools and then girls could tell their teachers what was happening to them and the teachers could put them in touch with Women's Aid. I hope that any girl who is now suffering like I did will feel able to talk about it to her local Women's Aid group or to ring me at Belfast 662082. O

Back to work

Cleaners at the Royal Russell, a private school in Surrey, have ended their strike for higher pay and recognition of their union, the GMWU (*SR 69*). Management has agreed to co-operate with ACAS, the government service set up to arbitrate between employers and unions, and the women have got a 15% rise which makes a 35% increase since November when they first joined the union. As they were then on only 57p an hour, pay is still far from adequate. O

Newshorts by Barbara Charles, Jill Nicholls, Angela Phillips, Ruth Wallsgrove

The Equal Pay Scene

CANTEEN WORKERS WIN

Tough guys

Lord Denning has ruled in the Appeal Court that women clerks working in betting shops should be paid the same as men, even if they're not expected to scare off violent customers.

This is important because it challenges the 'brawn and muscle' argument that employers often use. In this case, Sandra Shields' employers, Coomes Holdings who own a chain of betting shops in South London, said they paid a man more because his presence deterred customers from making trouble.

Denning ruled that Ms Shields and the male clerk did the same work; the man's presence was only seen as a threat, he didn't in fact do extra duties as a bouncer. If the firm wanted to employ a bouncer, under the Sex Discrimination Act they should advertise for the best individual for the job, not simply assume that all men are automatically tougher. The only reason for paying this man 14p an hour extra was because he was physically a man.

This confirms a previous appeal court judgement that the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts have to be used together — they form a single code of practice. Let's hope this thinking now goes back into the industrial tribunals so that individual women don't have to keep spending time and money taking cases to appeal. Meanwhile Coomes Holdings, refused leave to make a further appeal, are considering going straight to the House of Lords. They say the decision would add £45,000 a year to their wages bill.○

& postpeople

Postwoman Letitia Steel of Newport has finally won her fight against sex discrimination in the Post Office. Before 1975 postwomen were classified as 'temporary unestablished' staff and denied promotion rights. With the Sex Discrimination Act, all postpeople were put on an equal footing but women's years of service before 1975 didn't count for seniority.

A postwoman since 1961, Ms Steel applied in 1976 to work on a particular round, but was superceded by a man with far fewer years service. She protested and the tribunal decided that her seniority should be backdated to 1969 when the temporary grade for men was abolished. This decision, which affects 417 other women in similar situations, still has to be passed by the Union of Post Office Workers.○

Thirteen women employed by London's Camden Council as canteen workers on building sites have won equal pay through the efforts of their shop stewards committee and Camden Law Centre. They have won an extra £10 a week plus up to £100 back pay to bring their earnings into line with a male canteen worker. His pay came under a national agreement for 'general labourers' whereas they were categorised under a different wage agreement as 'canteen helpers'. Camden Council argued that the man had to be available for general labouring work as well as canteen duties, but the women proved that they were in fact doing virtually identical work to him and fitting it all into half a day less than he did.

Most of the women belonged to

discuss not only their case but other problems at work. Few of them had even met before as they all work on separate sites, buying food for the canteen in their spare time, cooking, serving, washing and cleaning up. By the time of the trial they had become friends and elected their own shop steward who now sits as the only woman on the joint shop stewards committee.

Through discussion with the committee they achieved improvements such as in the safety of canteen kitchens and in fixing prices for selling food. Several of the women had been losing money because they didn't have the confidence to raise prices on their own. So they had themselves borne losses suffered through unwise buying or through the labourers choos-



CHRIS SCHWARZ

Ann Kenwood, one of the victorious Camden canteen workers

the TGWU, which had refused to take up their case in the past, but as some of them belonged to two other unions, the Camden building department's joint shop steward committee, representing all the unions involved, was the ideal body to take up the case. It is small, and was flexible enough to work closely with the women and encourage them to participate in the preparation of the case. Its disadvantage is not having the support of a union legal department or funds to pay legal fees, so the law centre's support was crucial until the EOC took over the funding, recognising the importance of the way in which the case was being fought.

In the 16 months leading up to the Tribunal, regular meetings brought the women together to

ing to eat elsewhere. Earlier this year food was stolen from one of the canteens and the canteen worker was told she would have to pay for it out of her own wages. But the other women, along with the joint shop stewards committee and the labourers on the site, persuaded the council to repay her for the losses.

This case shows that though strike action is often necessary to win equal pay, it is sometimes possible to use the law and the tribunals. The success of this case not only in winning equal pay but in bringing women together to fight for improvements in working conditions may encourage other joint shop stewards committees to fight 'equality cases' in the same way.○

Naomi Angell

Too old at 60?

* A Court of Appeal has ruled that forcing a woman teacher to retire at 60 constitutes unfair dismissal. Ms Nothman took the London Borough of Barnet to an industrial tribunal when they told

her that her job would no longer be available when she reached 60, and fought on to the Court of Appeal without any legal assistance. What is extraordinary is that Barnet are now asking all other Metropolitan Authorities to give them money to appeal to the House of Lords!○

Information from Sue Ashby

Second time around

The Equal Opportunities Commission has now produced its second annual report—bigger, glossier and more expensive than the last.

The past year has seen little progress for women—the earnings gap between men and women actually widened in money terms; only 18.6% of Equal Pay cases were successful at tribunals; only 16 women won Sex Discrimination cases. (All this information is contained in a useful and extensive 'statistical digest' at the back of the report.)

Small wonder that the EOC itself "is not satisfied with the progress recorded in the report", and has been driven to establishing two additional offices in the national regions—in Glasgow and Cardiff, which should be opened later this year.

Meanwhile, the Government is given a rap on the knuckles for not promoting equality more energetically within its own ranks. The Department of Industry, for example, has only 2.3% women employees. But the Commission is anxious to emphasise that it "does not have an exclusive responsibility in the field of sex discrimination—all of us, from the Government and the powerful organisations on both sides of industry to small, local voluntary groups and individuals, are equally implicated in the task". If only "all of us" had equal resources with which to tackle the task, eh?○

Jenny Earle, Rights of Women
'Equal Opportunities Commission—
Second Annual Report' HMSO £2

Opting for 63

The Equal Opportunities Commission has just published a well-documented booklet meant to provide guidelines for further discussion on equalising the pension age. They recommend a retirement age for both men and women of 63 years. Although some women want to continue working beyond the present retirement age of 60 years and should have the choice (as the EOC point out), we must consider how the Sex Discrimination Act can be used to our disadvantage.

If the EOC's recommendation is taken up, women will have to work three more years before getting their pension. The TUC still supports equalising the pension age at 60. Why can't men get the full advantages of the SDA, instead of this compromise? As EOC chairperson Baroness Lockwood puts it, setting the retirement age at 63, apart from other advantages "has the added attractiveness of being a low or nil cost solution". It's economics again, of course!○

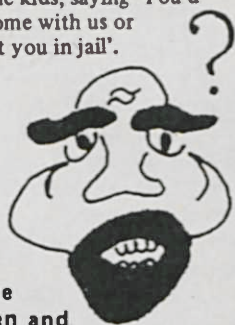
'Equalising the Pension Age'—free

Oxford nursery plays on

South Oxford Nursery, occupied since March by parents, children and supporters from the Oxford City Nursery campaign (see SR 70) was evicted on April 28, but is still going strong in a building just over the road. The council is now complacent that the 'problem' is solved, but with the violence of the eviction, people are angrier than ever and even more determined to show that they're not finished.

Oxford County Council took them to court on April 27 and got a possession order. Anne Marie Sweeney, one of the parents, explains: "We got a tip-off from the County Court that the bailiffs would come at seven the next morning, expecting no press or children. So we rang round the papers and got everyone there at 7am! It was full when the bailiffs arrived so they panicked and fled. The stupid fools came back at 11.30, right in the middle of a class—we had 16 kids there, and some press still. We refused to open the door so they smashed it in, breaking flowerpots and really upsetting the kids. There were

40 of them there—bailiffs, council officials, police—intimidating the kids, saying 'You'd better come with us or we'll put you in jail'.



So the children and their friends played all day in the nursery, and some of them stayed all night as well. And the brigadier stamped and swore.



"We had to decide whether to resist and be carried out—two Chilean parents were anxious not to because of the danger of being arrested, so we decided to leave together, singing." They went straight to the new premises they'd arranged—given them

by the Church.

At the end of July the council plans to close a middle school in the same building as the nursery: "We see this as an attack on our whole community" says Anne Marie "which just happens to be a prime development area."

The nursery is important as a local focus for the fight against the cuts and also nationally, as the only big occupation outside London. They plan to use the snowballing public support in a rally against the cuts on May 27. Contact Anne Marie, 40 Bartlemas Rd, Oxford (0865 723071). ○

He benefits

Child benefits rose in the last budget to £2.30 per child (£3.30 for single parents) and will rise again to £3 in November and £4 next April with a £2 premium for single parents. How much better these rates would have been if the Chancellor had not increased the state wedding present to all bridegrooms by £80 to £550 per year. This rise in the married man's tax allowance is twice that given to single people and wives.

At a meeting last year, a spokesperson for the Treasury replied to complaints about the inequalities in the tax system that ordinary women are not concerned about tax differen-

tials. Since then campaigns to reform the tax system have been launched by the Why Be A Wife Campaign, the National Council for Civil Liberties, the Child Poverty Action Group and even the *Sunday Times*.

Presumably the rise in the allowance is an attempt to offset the shattering blow dealt to married men as their child tax allowances are gradually reduced and paid to their wives as child benefits. But men do not need to have any 'dependents' to qualify for the wedding present, so money which could have been spent where it is needed, on low income families with children, is being squandered on childless married men. ○

Sick leave?

"The bosses never used to wonder how they'd cope with men's absence on National Service, so don't let them make excuses about maternity leave on that score": advice from a TGWU speaker to 200 delegates, mostly women trade unionists, who attended the National Council for Civil Liberties conference on pregnancy and maternity rights.

Other speakers outlined the history of the struggle for maternity rights and pointed out the pitfalls of current legislation. Women from all over the country heard of each other's experiences in negotiation, swapped tactics and were glad to be so numerous and determined.

But the difficulties of getting fellow trade unionists, let alone employers, to take the issue seriously are still with us. Pat Turner, National Industrial Officer of the GMWU, admitted to being ashamed at the lack of attention her union had given to what were seen as 'women's problems', and Brian Shemmings (from the film union ACTT) insisted on talking of maternity provisions as another form of sick leave.

Most importantly, the conference stressed links between maternity rights and adequate abortion and childcare provision. Maternity leave's no good to you if you don't want to be a mother. And if you do, and want to go out to work too, you must have childcare. ○



* Seven 13-year-old girls at Altwood Comprehensive in Maidenhead raised a 100-signature petition and threatened to report their headmaster to the EOC when he tried to push them out of a car maintenance class. Headmaster Maurice Edwards claimed the class was over-subscribed but the girls told him "You have a mixed class or none at all". He checked the law and gave in—it's large, and mixed.

SPUC moves

Through judicious manipulation of the media, the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child managed to make abortion a major election issue in Garscadden last month (SR 70). But their impact on voting was minimal.

But this doesn't mean they failed in their campaign. All the constituency parties were frightened into putting forward candidates who were to some extent anti-abortion. Even Dewar, the Labour candidate, who voted for the 1967 Act, backtracked when challenged by SPUC, speaking gravely about how wrong it was for the Labour Party to have policy in favour of abortion on request.

It is SPUC's effect on the selecting of candidates which should really give us cause for alarm and it is at this stage that pro-abortion campaigners must counter their propaganda. It is no use leafletting to get people to vote for the pro-abortion candidate if the major parties have already appointed anti-abortion candidates. SPUC are approaching the next election very seriously, planning to intervene in all marginal seats. In their April Bulletin they say: "We must ensure that abortion becomes a General Election issue,

with as many people as possible throughout the country voting for Pro-Life candidates regardless of party. It is only by having a truly overwhelming majority in Parliament that we can break the power of the vociferous minorities." That's us. ○

Abortion Law passed...

The Italian Chamber of Deputies has voted 308 to 275 to pass a bill — opposed by the Vatican — which makes abortion legal within the first 90 days of pregnancy for any woman over 18 who claims childbirth would endanger her physical or mental health. Previously all abortion was illegal.

The vote was finally taken on April 14 after the four Radical Party MPs had 'filibustered' the bill for 33 hours, submitting 275 amendments and each speaking for ten minutes on each. They hoped to force a referendum on abortion instead. Backed by several feminist groups, the Radicals want no regulating laws except one to make abortion free of charge.

A referendum was planned for June unless new legislation had been passed, so the Communists and the Christian Democrats — the two major parties, both afraid of a 'politically divisive' referendum — were anxious to push this bill through. ○

...& proposed

A woman's right to choose—what does it really mean and how are we to achieve it? These were the main issues discussed at the National Abortion Campaign Conference in Sheffield on April 29-30. The conference, small but representing a wide geographical spread of active NAC groups, decided by a large majority to adopt its own positive legislation repealing all laws relating to abortion and stating that "it shall not be an offence to have or perform a termination of pregnancy at the request of the woman concerned".

In addition it was decided to press now for a government-sponsored amendment to the NHS Re-organisation Act making it mandatory for local authorities to provide abortion facilities and personnel.

This decision means that NAC will not take up the Abortion Bill drafted by the Abortion Law Reform Association, although it will 'campaign vigorously' to increase the chances of any improvements on the present Abortion Act. The main difference between the two positions is that the ALRA Bill includes a time limit of 28 weeks after which the 'right to choose' reverts to a doctor. ○

MEXICO A BLOW TO MACHISMO

Jackie Buswell writes from Mexico about actions women are taking against rape.

Every-one says Mexico is macho country. And so it is. But what everyone doesn't say is that the women fighting against the machismo are beginning to win some battles, are fighting with a force stronger than the machismo — a force created as a result of machismo — knowing the enemy, so to speak.

1978 began with a major victory for the feminists against rape. The woman involved was Celia, divorcee, mother of a three year old girl. (Of course one always has to know the marital status of the rape victim — is she a whore, is she a lesbian, does she dare to live alone with her daughter, is she a virgin and if not, why not. So we see that, as a rape victim in the male courts, Celia has one thing in her favour — sacred motherhood, and one thing against her — the divorce.)

During the festive Christmas season a man broke into her apartment threatening her with a knife after smashing the lock: "Sleep with me or I will kill you." Celia was alone this night, studying for exams. She had met the man casually several times, but had never wanted to develop any type of sexual relation with him. When threatened with the knife, Celia pretended to agree: "OK, wait a minute, I must do something in the bedroom." And returned with a pistol. He said: "Ha Ha Think you can frighten me with your stupid pistol Ha Ha."

So she did. Killing him instantly, one shot.

But then she was frightened at what she had done and went to the police to report what had happened. And so found herself in prison, charged with homicide.

Two days later the feminists were acting on the case. They went to the prison in groups to assure Celia: "You are not alone, we are all here together with you." Celia burst into tears of astonished relief on seeing and hearing these women who appeared in her support apparently from nowhere. (But they were not from nowhere, they were from the Coalicion de Mujeres, a group incorporating five different women's groups.)

Representatives from the Coalicion went to see the Attorney General of the District Federal (Mexico City), pleading the rights of women to defend themselves against male violence. On January 2, Celia was free (the attempted rape took place on the night of December 27), according to the judge's verdict that she acted in her rights to defend her physical and sexual liberty.

It was a case unprecedented in a country where the statisticians hypothesise that one hundred thousand rapes are committed annually. (Population: more than 60 million). Of those raped, 25% are between 15-19 years; 20% are between 10-14, and 8% are under 10 years of age. Of course, very few rapes are reported. Less than two percent are dealt with in the courts. For reasons of the "macho country" The violence, the threats, the pay-offs.

For example, the story of Guadalupe, who was raped last June when leaving the university after her night class in Law. She was forced into a car by three men, one raped her while the other two "held her down" (as they say). She prose-

cuted. She sought the assistance of the Coalicion de Mujeres (in which group she is now a militant fighter). Representatives of the group again went to see the Attorney General, and also, the Judge. In the months before the trial in February, Guadalupe was receiving offers of bribes backed up by threats of violence from the rapists and their friends. As was the Judge, a woman. She sentenced the rapist to ten years jail, and his two assistants to nine and a half years jail, thus emphasising the equal culpability of these two assailants.

The feminists were exuberant that such a precedent was made with this sentence. But of course the sentence produced more violence on the part of the friends of the rapists. Several times Guadalupe and her husband were beaten up on the street. The Judge was threatened again and again. The feminists arranged that she receive special police protection. But for Guadalupe there is still no security, and her major fear is that her children will suffer reprisals.

But yes, she thinks it was worth the pain of prosecuting. For more women are coming to the Coalicion to report rape cases and other injustices. At each weekly meeting of the Coalicion come women from all classes, all walks of life to tell a story of injustice. Battered wives. Raped women. Women dismissed unfairly from their work.

And each woman in the Coalicion responds to the stories with an anger as if the crime was committed against herself. And in this spirit, they act.

Another example of rape, even more horrific — a 12 year old girl, raped, made pregnant, and now, at 13, a mother. The same story — threats and violence to the victim's family, pay-offs in the halls of justice. This rape happened more than a year ago, and the court case is still pending. The two rapists (this time, a father and son team) live next door to the child-mother and her family, who, of course, are living in a situation of extreme fear and a very real danger.

The plight of this child-mother is another issue of the feminists' campaign: the right to abortion for raped women in a Catholic country where abortion is still illegal. The Attorney General's Department is currently dealing with a list of demands from the Coalicion and other feminist groups to improve the situation of raped women. The demands emphasise that heavy penal sentences are *not* the solution, that other legal and social changes have to be made.

At this point in Mexico there are no Rape Crisis Centres or Homes for Battered Women, such as exist in Britain. And the need here is probably even greater. Perhaps you women in Britain who have been organising these centres could send information of your experiences in establishing and running the centres to the Women's Centre in Mexico. There is, there will be, international sisterhood. The address is:

Centro de Mujeres
Rio Ebro #3 Dept. 1.
Colonia Cuahetemoc, Mexico D.F. 5



GREEK WOMEN ON THE MARCH

BUT NOT FOR THE STATE

Jane Gabriel, who lived in Athens for a year, spent much time talking to women about the problems of organising around issues affecting them.

Here she gives the background to the growth of a women's movement in Greece.

Since the junta fell in Greece nearly four years ago and political parties were legalised for the first time in seven years, Greek women have started to organise amongst themselves to combat the deeply sexist society in which they live. Last summer a bill was passed in Parliament that interferes in the lives of all Greek women; it was met with angry and organised protests from thousands of women, and let the government know for the first time the extent to which a women's liberation movement is now being established in Greece.

The bill allows the defence minister to draft women up to the age of fifty into the army for an initial period of two years, women may be drafted at any time and can be called up by name, district, or occupation; duration of service may be prolonged indefinitely if the minister believes it necessary. Despite the enormous powers granted to the defence minister the Karamanlis government insists that military service for women is 'voluntary' . . . and to entice 'volunteers' has set up a system of bribes for those who do sign up. For example women seeking employment in the public sector after they've done time will automatically be granted a five percent benefit in the qualifying exam. All this in the name of Equality for women à la Karamanlis. The more 'equal' women naturally being those who join the army and/or share the right-wing militaristic views of the Greek government. The fact that the bill allows women to be called up by occupational groups may have disastrous effects on union activity, something which is on the increase amongst women.

As soon as news of the pending bill got around, women from sixteen different women's organisations, representing over twenty thousand women, formed them-

selves into a committee to fight the bill.

In spite of this organised protest the government totally ignored the women's demands and the bill was pushed through Parliament by Karamanlis' right-wing supporters.

What is exciting though is that this was the first time that women in Greece have come together to fight for their own interests, and it marks a big step forward in laying the groundwork for a coherent women's movement; also the amount of discussion which went on around the bill and the increase in public awareness about the position of women was enormous.

The protest against the bill was based in Athens and although the women's movement has sprung primarily from the experiences of women in the cities—torn with contradictions between family and work demands—there is a very real potential for their ideas to spread to the countryside where women's oppression is more deeply embedded and internalised. The women I met frequently referred to the enormous cultural differences between city and country, and the need ultimately for the women's movement to bridge the gap; and the demands they are now making are for *all* Greek women—one group have been talking throughout the countryside as part of a campaign to improve the working situation of peasant women.

On the whole most women struggling for equality are working within the political party they belong to, and every party left of centre now has a women's committee which pushes for party discussion of women's issues. And as the political consciousness and participation in Greece spreads over from the city deep into the countryside, the changing ideas about women may

spread quite quickly, though what impact they will have on attitudes is uncertain.

For many of the women I spoke to though, working in a political party for their rights as women is no longer tenable, they have become impatient with feminism being fitted into already existing party structures. This is partly because they can't stand working with men on the left who either laugh incredulously at them, or even if genuinely concerned, totally fail to understand the situation women are in. One woman told me of her total inability to get across the concept of 'the personal is political' . . . as one woman told me "each man's mother is not a woman . . . she is his mother"! So for now, although the women in the two autonomous groups I talked with say they would gladly work with sympathetic men on the left if they could find any, they are concentrating on educating each other and spreading information to women in all parts of the country.

One of these autonomous groups is the Committee of Democratic Women which has representatives of women from parties from centre to left, and has about two thousand members from all over Greece. Its main work to date has been pushing for the implementation of equal pay; the campaign is carried out through the distribution of leaflets, articles in newspapers, and by women travelling round Greece giving lectures in theatres and schools. For this year the committee is planning a campaign to demand childcare facilities, preschools and state aid for mothers; it is also making contact with women specialists and increasingly functions as an advice centre.

The other group is the Movement for the Liberation of Women, it started with five women in 1974 and there

are now fifty women who meet and work regularly together in four groups. The Maternity and Children group have been collecting statistics and information on the educational situation and recently decided to press for the creation of creches in the neighbourhood and workplace—in the past two years three such creches have been started in Athens by women, in one case the parents help cook the children's meals and pay as much as they can afford. The Women and Mass Media group is preparing an exhibition of photos and slogans exposing the gap between the media image of women and how we really are. The Working Women are getting together a booklet with demands for better working conditions. When the telephone operators went on strike in Athens this group became involved with and supported the women on strike and introduced discussion of the double exploitation women suffer. The fact that ninety percent of the female workforce is unskilled; that in some places twelve year old girls work for less than a pound a day and that it is illegal for women to work after midnight (when it is most lucrative) give us an ▶



idea of what kind of things this group will be struggling to change. The Sexuality group has achieved the most visible results so far. They had an exhibition on contraception and abortion that set out to explain how contraception works and what methods are available. The exhibition got an enormously positive response with women of all ages crowding in from the street and has since gone to a town in the north of Greece and to the islands.

Because Greek women are so totally housebound they are in the dominant position when it comes to imparting attitudes to their children, but in every other respect the family situation is one in which women are absolutely subservient to their husbands and Greek family law implements these values. It gives the man complete control over deciding how and where the family lives, the size of the family, the names of the children and whether the woman works or not. Women are not entitled to their own social security or insurance, and all rights to their dowry they hand over to the man on marriage. Right now the law is under review by the opposition parties in Parliament, and women have recently formed

a committee of their own to study the new proposals, and campaign for radical change.

The national elections last November also brought feminists together. Women from five allied political parties on the left drew up their own election slate demanding free legal abortion, three months paid maternity leave with job security guaranteed, contraceptive information and sex education in schools, and measures leading to the financial independence of women such as their own insurance and social security, equal pay and the right to work without the consent of their husbands. The Committee of Democratic Women put out a pamphlet encouraging women to vote for the party they wanted rather than for the party their husbands wanted.

In Britain we talk (or don't talk) about Greece as if it were not part of Europe; it's true that its history ties it to the East and that its culture is a combination of both the East and the Mediterranean, but its economy is in many ways similar to those of Portugal, Spain and Italy, and as a political arena with a potential for socialist transformation it is closely linked to them.

So I think it's important that we hear news from women in Greece and that we give them our support.

got used to being a small group. And the other thing is that they wanted to reassess certain things that we took for granted—this was very healthy.

How many people work on the magazine?

About fifteen people work hard on it, including writing, layout, carrying packages, everything. Some of the articles are personal—that is, one woman sat down and wrote them, and some are collective, and were written after discussion. We drew on all the things the group has done up to now. That is, we had done some work on abortion and contraception, so there is an article on that; we have done some work on reform schools, and there is an article on that. We have some contact with the women who work on the telephone exchange, and there is a small article about their strike. There is a piece about the kind of paper we want—in short that we want a voice of our own. There's an interview with a nurse; and a debate on Wages for Housework—most of this one is translated.

Were most of the articles written by members of the group?

All of them. Although we decided that it's desirable that women from outside should contribute, with letters or articles, or reports on their place of work—instead of us getting an interview with them. We got many letters in response to the magazine. We get letters every day—sometimes from people wanting contacts, isolated women in remote areas of Greece. And some of them ask for subscriptions—and this is quite difficult. It's a question of our relationship with the people who read the paper. We don't just want to make subscriptions, when so many women are interested in the women's movement, and they

identify with the paper; the thing to do is to get in touch with these women.

There are all sorts of criticisms of the paper. The main criticism, which is correct I think, is that the articles are theoretical and general—they reflect the real fact that we are not in touch with what we are writing about. We have thought about big areas of women's oppression, abortion, contraception, work, ideology, but in a very general way. The articles are more or less concentrated result of what we've been talking about for two years. But it's not very much alive—you could read it after six months and it wouldn't matter.

All the same, now that you've got so much response from other women, don't you think the next issue is bound to be more practical? Now that women know they've got somewhere to write about their struggles?

Yes, but first of all you've got to have struggles to write about. I'm not saying there aren't any—but there isn't a working women's movement right now, in the sense that you could go around writing about women's struggles all over the place. There are very important things beginning to happen...

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Shall we talk about the Women's Movement in general here. I saw the posters for International Women's Day. What happened then?

Various women's organisations had meetings. We didn't, we just printed the posters—which was the same as the international poster. International Women's Day has become fashionable in Greece in the last two years, nobody knew about it before. Last year, all the political parties and women's organisations and so on came out with meetings and manifestos and celebrations. Last year we wrote a leaflet more or less against Women's Day—that is, the main slogan was that they celebrate us for one day but they oppress us for all the rest of the days, so let's have everyday struggles against everyday oppression. While other organisations more or less celebrated the day—in a militant way of course—where they talked about how much we have gained in recent years, and how even bourgeois capitalist countries are giving us more and

Lucy Whitman interviewed a member of a women's group in Athens, 'The Movement for Women's Liberation', which in February this year brought out the first Greek feminist paper. 3000 copies sold out within a fortnight, and they had to print another 2000.

THE MAGAZINE

We made this paper after months of discussions about whether the time was right to do it—and when it came out, we more or less became famous overnight. Because it

seems the paper was very successful, with all its imperfections. Lots of women, when they read the paper, said, "All right, we're joining!" They were eager to get to work, but we weren't exactly ready for them, we'd sort of



more... we thought about having an open meeting this year, using the day to talk to a wider audience; but finally we decided not to do it, exactly because we are against this kind of celebration.

Have there been any women's marches?
No.

How common is to to have demonstrations here, for other political issues?

Well, we haven't had many lately. Because in the first place, it's getting more and more difficult to have a march where people don't get attacked by the police. For the last two years all marches have been forbidden on the grounds of public order. Some marches have been banned but they have taken place anyway. But you've got to mean it. I feel this anyway—if I go to a march now, I must have decided in advance that I'm going to clash with the police. It's not necessarily going to be peaceful. Women haven't yet appeared, in a block, independently.

Anyway, are there other women's groups springing up, round the country?

Yes. Not exactly springing up—planted perhaps. I'm not saying that sarcastically, I think there is fertile ground for women's groups to be planted, if you see what I mean. There is a response, they're not imposed. After the military dictatorship ended in 1974 there was a great flourishing—on all sorts of political spheres, including women's groups—groups of housewives, consumer organisations, and almost all political parties, have a women's branch—and that's all over Greece, not just in Athens.

THE ARMY

Has there ever been such a thing as a national conference? There was last year, and it was called a Confederation of Women's Organisations, and this was supposed to include everybody and there was a Press Conference. It was called to discuss the drafting of women into the army, although we attended we didn't agree with the general political platform. The point was to have one united statement, that would be presented to the Press Conference from all the women. But we couldn't agree, mainly on national independence, and questions like this. Under new legislation which



ABOUT 530-500 BC

will come into force from next year, women will be conscripted into the army for the first time, for two kinds of emergency—war and 'internal threats', that is, for strike breaking. Mothers and women caring for the old and disabled will be exempt.

Some women were only concerned about the question of equality within the army—because as it is put in the bill, women are not going to fight, but to do secondary jobs in the army, 'according to their nature', such as cleaning, nursing, teaching and so on. But we fought on both grounds, of course, we don't believe that women should do jobs that are extensions of their role as mothers, cleaners, wives and so on, but also, we question the whole role of the army—and the relationship of the army to the Labour Movement, and to the Labour Movement of other countries. This was a basic disagreement. Other women said, 'Now there is a right-wing party in power, and we don't agree with how they are running the country, but if and when we think we should defend the country, we shall defend it, like we have always done'. This is tricky—when do you think the time is right to defend your country? For example, when do you ally yourself with the ruling class against some enemy that you consider is even worse than the ruling class? We said, the ruling class

is the enemy, and in no case can we fight with them against the people of another country.

Those women who are unconditionally against the draft produced a statement saying:

"We refuse to defend the Greek bosses against the Turkish bosses, at the cost of the lives of Greek and Turkish workers. Women should refuse to be part of the state machinery which upholds and practises repression and chauvinism and actively breaks strikes and destroys the workers' movement."

"Women should refuse to justify their existence by answering the false dilemma of 'either mothers or soldiers'. Women do not owe motherhood to the 'nation'. Motherhood should be a free choice. The government is trying to strike a double bargain here. Either we augment the army, or the population. We mustn't let them win."

"Our liberation will only come through our struggles as workers. We do not want women to become bosses, we want to be rid of bosses altogether. We don't want to rape men as they rape us. In the same way, we do not demand equal rights in slaughtering, we want equality in fighting patriarchal and class oppression."

But your group was very much in the minority. Do you expect women are going to resist the draft?

Well you see in the first place, it's supposed to be voluntary, so it will happen little by little, and this will soften the blow. But the whole question is not just the resistance of the women, but the resistance of the men as well. But none of the political groups or parties really took it up in a strong way.

SEXUAL MORES

Tell me about attitudes to sex here. There still seems to be a double standard of morality. I have heard that some girls have their hymens resealed before they get married. People don't talk about it, so it's difficult to say how common it is. I know of a girl whose mother wouldn't believe she was a virgin, so she took her to a doctor. The doctor said yes, she was a virgin, but she wouldn't believe him. So she took her to another doctor, and he said, no, she isn't a virgin, but never mind, I can fix it, and he sewed her up so well, it was a cross between a hymen and a chastity belt. Then her mother permitted her to go abroad.

So she wasn't getting married? No, she was preparing the girl for being away from home; it really was a chastity belt. But on the one hand, virginity is in a sense losing its value, amongst youth, in the towns and so on. On the other hand, there is still a very strong superstition; it's a question of ▶

class, a question of town or village, a question of education, and of men, and what they expect.

And it can lead to one of these 'crimes of honour' which are described in an article in your paper, where women are murdered by their husbands or fathers because they have not been 'chaste', and the murderers are let off lightly by the law. How common are these crimes?

Quite common. You hear of about two a month. Also, there are all sorts of tragedies that do not lead to death necessarily, such as when girls are locked up in reform schools. Many of them are there just because they spent a night away from home, and when they came back they were not virgins any more. They were fifteen or sixteen years old, and their families threw them out, and they started wandering around in bars, and then one day they were arrested, and that was it. Or girls getting married just because they can't do otherwise—that is, because they were discovered with their boyfriends. Premarital sex is only accepted as long as it is premarital, as long as there is marriage afterwards.

Is there sex education in schools?

No. There is anti-sex education.

Are contraceptives difficult to get hold of?

Condoms are very easy to get hold of, they are sold literally everywhere. But spermicide is not at all common, the diaphragm and the IUD are almost unknown. I have a diaphragm, but there are very few doctors who can fit it, and only one pharmacy that sells it, in Athens. And it's not terribly safe either. The pill is commonly used.

How easily available is the pill?

You can get it on prescription. But the Health Service is generally very bad, not only as regards women—if you don't have money you can just die. Probably in villages the local pharmacies wouldn't even have the pill. But you need information on heart disease, and blood pressure, for example, but usually they don't examine you, or tell you anything, or ask you anything, so you just pay 500 drachmas for a prescription. If you're lucky, or if you're informed enough to ask the doctor to examine you, you're all right; but if you just say you want contraceptives,

he'll just write down the name of a brand.

SEXUALITY

Has there been much discussion in your group about sexuality?

In general yes, but we still find it difficult to be personal about sexuality. That is we do have a tendency to talk about other women, or about our oppressed sexuality in general, how 60% of women never have orgasms and so on. There is some talk now about trying to have deeper discussions, more personal ones. We have discussed it in very small groups, in twos or threes that feel more friendly, but as a movement generally we haven't done much about it. It's not that anybody says 'no', it's just that it's difficult.

Have any of you had experience of Consciousness Raising groups in other countries?

We had a consciousness raising group here, two years ago, and it didn't last very long; we tried to start it again this year but again it fell through because we were so disorganised. The idea was to have many small groups, so that we weren't just in groups of friends, and to have discussions, not only, but mainly on sexuality, because it is the most censored subject.

GAY STRUGGLES

Has there been any organisation among lesbians so far?

No, not as such. There are lesbians of course, but not organised as lesbians.

Do you think that's likely to happen soon?

I hope so. Lesbianism is not recognised in the same way as male homosexuality. You know, it passes off in various underground ways, either because female sexuality is not supposed to exist at all, or because it passes off as general tenderness among women. There isn't even a law against it. But then there isn't a law

about women seducing little boys—it's not only about homosexuality, it's about female sexuality in general. If you don't have a sexuality you don't have it with men or with women.

I have heard that male gays are beginning to organise here now.

What do you think about the connection between the women's movement and the male gay movement?

Well, at first we hadn't thought about it, but there was a bill that was being prepared for Parliament, called something like, 'For the protection of public decency, and against the spread of VD.' And the point was, that homosexuals that were arrested for prostitution could be convicted, imprisoned and exiled. And this raised hell in the circles concerned.

This was last summer. There was a meeting organised by homosexuals and transvestites, where we—that is the Women's Movement—read a solidarity message. And from that point we have had a few discussions about the similarity between the homosexual struggle and the women's struggle—that there is a fight against roles, and accepted ways of behaviour, and a sexuality that is outside the reproductive system and outside the accepted family model. We have got some contacts with the men in the homosexual campaign.

Do you think you'll get support from them?

Well, I really think their position is very difficult. The Women's Movement is very fashionable now, whether it is revolutionary or reformist or bourgeois or whatever, it's everywhere, it's the 'in' thing. While the gay movement is not at all in fashion. It's very difficult for them; they want help from us—I don't think we can get help from them, because there are too few.

But this bill which was being proposed wasn't passed? Not yet, but it's still under discussion.

WORKING WITH MEN

What do you think about working with men in general?

There are men who are feminist sympathisers—husbands, friends and boyfriends of feminist women, who are, in a way, quite close to the politics and the ideas of the Women's Movement. We've made it clear that the Women's Movement is going to have women only, but we see the possibility of collaborating with men on certain issues. For example, the army: we don't necessarily want to take on the whole thing by ourselves, since it is something that concerns both sexes. Or even the question of contraception. We take up the struggle because we are the first to be hit by the consequences, but since we believe that it's a problem for both men and women, and the solution of this problem would make everyone happier, we would very much like to see men take up the issue.

Do you think that men in the left-wing political groups are developing their consciousness about sexual politics?

Personally, no. Well, I suppose something somewhere is beginning to change, but I don't think that as political groups or as men they are doing anything very striking. There is some pressure from the women, both personally in their relationships, and politically in whatever group they belong to. There is going to be more and more pressure from the women, more and more is going to be questioned. □

Special thanks to Micky for arranging the interview for me and translating the women's paper, and to 'A' for being interviewed.



Carole: Did you expect *Spare Rib* to review your EP *Rising Free*?

Tom: To tell you the truth I was really knocked out that you did.

Susan: We found that people who mentioned the review were terribly protective of you—'Don't say anything negative about Tom.'

Carole: And people who read *Spare Rib* seemed pleased that we reviewed you.

Tom: It's always difficult for me to sing a pro-feminist song—like 'Right On Sister'—as a man. It's a difficult decision because I know how I'd feel if some heterosexual sang about gay rights, and really patronised it. The lyrics in that song are not that deep—they're more a string of fairly well known clichés.

Susan: Perhaps you feel you couldn't have written much more than that? All you were doing was making strong sounds of solidarity—you weren't trying to contribute towards the feminist analysis, were you?

Tom: No. The whole song can be encapsulated in that chorus, *Right On Sister*. Full stop. After working on the *Gay Sweatshop* pantomime, I wanted to write it because I hadn't worked or come into contact with really dynamite feminists before. Just as I don't come into direct contact with what black people are doing. I get really depressed when people write in and say, "You're patronising". You have to try and evaluate if they're just having a go, or whether they've got a constructive point to make. Like that *Temporary Hoarding* * interview, where I talked about the 14 year old girls on *Top of the Pops*—that they are shown up to the front of the stage to be fodder for the camera, even though we were miming. The whole thing about an audience is that you try to find a common ground between them, so we squatted down at the front of the stage chatting to them. Then I got this letter from a 14 year old girl who goes to school with the girls who go to *Top of the Pops* regularly saying, "Who do you bloody think you are—talking about pathetic little 14 year old girls? Listen, my friends like The Clash and David Bowie, and they thought you were pathetic, mate! Don't be so bloody patronising—we're people too, thank you very much."

Carole: And we're not so easily herded about!

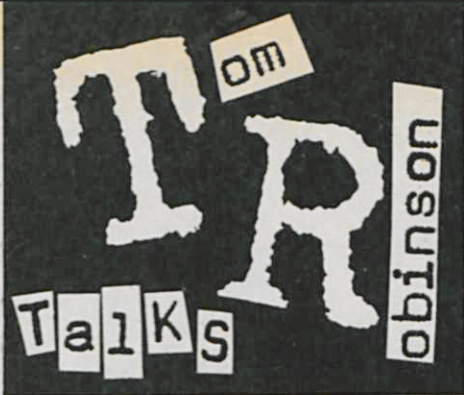
Tom: Right! Now it's really painful to read the thing, because I was absolutely talking down to them.

SEXISM — "DO YOU WANNA GO BACKSTAGE AFTER?"

Susan: How strong is the fight among gay men against sexism?

Tom: Well, I wonder how deep it goes? I feel possibly it's only a minority of them, because they don't see it as affecting them. Number one, they're men, and number two, they're single,

* *Rock Against Racism* paper



On the Sunday before May Day 80,000 people marched through East London where the National Front has been notoriously active, and listened to bands playing for Rock Against Racism.

Topping the bill was the TOM ROBINSON BAND (TRB)—they make records that are explicit about oppression and the tactics of the right.

The band, fighting all the way to the top of the charts, is now an amazing commercial success.

Carole Spedding and Susan Hemmings talked to Tom about being gay in the sexist world of pop music, about his politics, and his future.



MARK RUSHER (JFL)

and bound to be better off than their heterosexual brother because they don't have any quote dependents unquote. They're in a position of privilege in society—if they don't declare themselves—a very privileged position. You'll find a lot of gay men are staunch conservatives, and staunch supporters of the C of E—they really want to belong.

Susan: Do those gays sing along with you? Do you come into contact with them much?

Tom: Club-going, straight-by-day, gay-by-night people? No, I don't think they like the band very much. From what I've heard, too, those sorts of discos are very reluctant to put on 'Glad to be

Gay' and the general feeling is "Look, don't rock the boat, we're all right, thank you very much". They don't realise that if women's rights go down, they're done for; and that if the heavy right comes in, they've had it. I don't think they have any interest and awareness in the lot of other gay men.

Carole: How about sexism you encounter when you're working?

Tom: It's difficult now with the band because as the entourage gets bigger, you get complete strangers in on the organisation. There was a guy selling Rock Against Racism tee-shirts and badges who was, as far as I know, a perfectly nice amiable guy. Kate, who works for RAR, came to a gig and she saw that he was selling these for more than he should have been. It wasn't actually his fault—he'd been told the wrong price by the management. So Kate and some of her friends freaked out at him, and said, "Look you're selling these at the wrong price" and in the end he said, "Just fuck off, and join a Women's Lib march or something". Bombshell!

Carole: What happened? Did anyone talk to him about it?

Tom: Well, yes, and the price of the badges went down! It certainly made me think. Also we get young girls who want to come backstage afterwards, and there are roadies or humpers, or minor people in the band's entourage, saying, "We'll let you in, but you've got to come back to my hotel afterwards". And they do it—because they really want that much to see the group. The group themselves will never ever know about it, necessarily.

Carole: There's a terribly cruel scene—an extension of that, a selective process that goes on where some heavy roadie goes up to some girl who's with her friend who happens to be a bit plump and wearing glasses and says, "You can go in, but your friend can't". In other words, "You look good enough to be a groupie, but your friend doesn't".

Tom: When I went to see Free in 1970, there was one young woman with us, and as we were walking into the venue, this roadie was standing there, and he stopped her and said, "Do you wanna go back stage afterwards?" Just because she was good looking.

Susan: What about you personally? What problems do you have with male groupies?

Tom: Problems? (Laughs.) In point of fact, gay men have got so many hangups, that they very rarely come up. Sometimes you get letters saying, "I'm 18½, I really want to meet you, very soon, where can we meet? By the way I'm brown haired, slim and very handsome. Somebody says you are not gay—I would like you to prove to me that it is true."

Susan: Do you get a lot of mail like that?

Tom: No, not a lot. But even if they send a photo, and it's the most beautiful looking guy, I'd be wary. It implies such an unequal status. And they'd be a total liability—they've only got to stay out the night—parents say where have you been—



son confesses and that's me inside for two years.

Susan: You've often talked about having the ambiguities of your lyrics misinterpreted, so I felt that your song 'Martin' might in some ways be interpreted as the middle-class gay male attraction to working-class men.

Tom: Yes—own up time—that must come into it. But I didn't write that consciously. Mainly I just thought about this football hooligan who's got a kid brother, so it's his song, and I sung it in his voice.

Susan: What other voices do you use?

You wouldn't put on a West Indian accent, would you? What accent is it in 'Right On Sister'?

Tom: That's a standard rock voice. When you sing you intone things differently. My own natural speaking voice doesn't work in rock.

Susan: I wonder why that is? Could it be that male rock singers have developed an accent that they think makes them sound more potent? And talking about potency, what's all this with the 'Grey Cortina' song? And the motorbikes? They're very male preoccupations, aren't they? What's it about?

Tom: Fun! Fun is the answer to that one. I just thought the idea of this grey Cortina 1971 with the alloy wheels and the little wooden steering wheel and all the silly little flash bits on it—just fantastic! It's such a cliché.

Susan: But it can't be for a lot of us—I drive around a lot, and I've never seen one!

Carole: Nor have I, and I've been driving since I was 12.

Tom: And you don't notice that these bloody cars keep overtaking you? I'm driving along and suddenly this thing, headlights on, chequer tape down the back, football boots hanging down, big aerial, comes blazing past, berzoooommm.

Susan: No, doesn't mean anything to me.

Tom: Well!

Susan: It's something to do with performance and competition isn't it?

Carole: Does it spur you on to overtake him?

Tom: The guy's all pokerfaced about it—he's dead cool... it's all been defined now in this song—and I collapse in fits of laughter. I wish I had the nerve to bring it off.

Susan: Don't you think it's phallic, all that imagery?

Tom: Might well be.

Carole: My mother was distressed when I was 16 because I wouldn't go out with this guy who had a Borg Ward—she obviously thought it would mean stepping into another class. What she didn't do to get me to go out with this guy—had him around for meals and everything! I went out with a guy with an

MARK RUSHER (IFL)



She's a right on sister,
and she knows what she likes,

she needs you and me man
like a fish needs a bike

and I say right on sister,
right on sister, right on
right on sister, right on sister,
right on

Anglia instead, and I can remember the two guys battling out the front, where to park their cars.

Susan: If 'Glad To Be Gay' was thought to be so risky by the music industry I wonder why it has turned out to be so popular.

Carole: We know that there was some opposition to pressing 'Glad To Be Gay'—did you have any trouble having 'Right On Sister' included on the EP? Did anybody see that track as a threat?

Tom: No, there was no opposition at all! But BBC Radio 1 wouldn't play 'Rising Free'—they wouldn't play any of the tracks: 'Right On Sister' because it had the word 'shit' in it; 'Martin' because it was incitement to violence, 'Don't Take No For An Answer' because it was too long, and 'Glad To Be Gay' because it advertised the *Daily Express*, *Telegraph*, and *People!* Honestly, they were the grounds they gave.

Carole: I listened to the Capital Radio music awards, and by the time they had finished I was very angry. First of all, Michael Aspel said, "It's obligatory at these occasions to have a well known celebrity (male) and a beautiful woman"... Everybody said "wow" and then he added, "with intelligence", and everyone fell about laughing. So he set the tone for the whole programme. When he

came to Female Singer of the Year, Maurice Oberstein of CBS who was in the audience yelled out "Tom Robinson!" Aspel did nothing, and when he later said you couldn't be there to receive your awards, a voice yelled out, "No, she's in Bournemouth".

Tom: And Aspel replied, "Well, he hasn't yet arrived, but when he does, I'll point him in your direction".

Carole: Next day I rang up Capital Radio and complained. I said that Masters of Ceremony have a lot of manipulative power and should use it responsibly. The public relations woman said, "Well, don't you think that if Tom Robinson puts out records like 'Glad To Be Gay' he must expect this kind of behaviour back?"

Tom: I don't expect it, but I'm not surprised by it.

POLITICS —

"YOU GET SO MUCH

FLAK FOR IT, ESPECIALLY

FROM YOUR OWN SIDE."

Carole: What about the inequality in the group—you being the front man and so on?

Tom: Well, I write all the lyrics, and the band by and large deals with the music. It's fairly democratic. If there's something one member of the band loathes, we won't do it.

Susan: Why might he loathe it? Do they sometimes not agree with the politics?

Tom: No, except once when Danny said, "Please—no song about Belfast, I'm just terrified by all that". That's the only time; generally it's simply on musical grounds. "I don't like playing that."

Susan: That's strange, because the main content of the song appears to be in the lyrics. So you don't have very complex discussions in the band about the politics of the lyrics?

Tom: No we don't. I say "Here's a lyric".

Susan: And they trust your political line? That's quite unusual for bands that play politicised music—isn't it usually written more collectively?

Tom: Yes, but those bands have a different perspective. They have something to say politically, and they use the music to do it. We're a band and that's what we do for a living. As a rock band we want to play to people who like rock music. The band exists, and would exist whatever—we're professional musicians. But given the band exists, it's possible to use the by-products of its energy in a useful way. We can give people our bulletins about Rock Against



Racism, BIT, A Woman's Right To Choose, *Spare Rib*, Anti-Nazi League, NCCL, Gay Switchboard—it gives people channels to take up their own field of action. So it does come second to the principal thing of us having a band anyway.

Susan: Do you think one of the things you may be doing is putting over your politics as contained in the lyrics, but giving people very conventional music, so they can get what they want without being challenged by the full implications of the words?

Tom: Certainly. You must deliver rock and roll that works. *You're* doing a feminist magazine and it has to work as a magazine—it can't just be banged together. It must work as a piece of literature before you even start to think about some kind of message or standpoint, otherwise no-one will read it.

Susan: I don't see the same split between form and content. We couldn't say *Spare Rib* would be a damn fine magazine no matter what, in the same way that you see your band. Because that's what you are saying your band wants to do—primarily music?

Tom: Yes, and a number of reviews have said things like, "Whether you agree with its politics or not, it's damn fine rock and roll—go and hear it".

Susan: Well how would it be if the band was more challenging musically?

Tom: It depends who you're trying to reach and why. Are you trying to keep your dialectics absolutely 100% pure, and bypass the system and the hypocrisies, and only reach a handful? Or do you accept a lot of compromise which will ultimately eat you away and render you useless, but at the same time give you an increasingly large audience as that usefulness declines? We *are* getting eaten into the system, and I *am* getting eroded, I can't help it—at the same time, we are reaching a wider audience.

Susan: You've either got to be populist or elitist?

Tom: Right, because if you try to be really faithful to your politics you do become elitist. I really admire *Henry Cow* and *Jam Today* for staying on the line—people like that can be a real inspiration. *Hot Peaches*, the gay group who played all gay songs as if heterosexuals didn't exist, were fantastic, got me really angry, and I wrote 'Long Hot Summer' definitely because of what they were. But if you're really going to reach the people you want to politicise—women in the home, taxi drivers, people in factories, schoolkids—you've got to get on to Radio 1, where they'll hear '2468', even if they don't hear 'Glad To Be Gay'. Then they'll come to the concert, and get the bulletin, and maybe in six months they'll go "whirr click" and get the bulletin out of the drawer—open the doorway to something else. And honestly it would be so much easier not to do it! 'Motorway' itself proved

MARK RUSHER (IFL)



Wish I had a grey Cortina,
Whiplash aerial, racing trim
Cortina owner, no-one meaner
Wish that I could be like him.

Furlined seats and lettered windscreen
Elbow on the window sill
A-track blazing Bruce Springsteen
Bomber jacket dressed to kill.

Never cop a parking ticket
Never seems to show its age
Speed police too slow to nick it
Grey Cortina, got it made . . .

you could make a perfectly good living just playing rock and roll. You get so much flak for it especially from your own side.

Susan: If there were other men standing with you, giving you constructive support, wouldn't you have less pressure put on you? Otherwise it's such a responsibility, producing on your own lines about blacks, gays and women.

Tom: I'm trying to do it without treading on people's toes all the time. But in recent weeks there's been within the band more political discussion than ever before. And the more I get politicised personally, the more I hope the songs will always be honest to what I'm feeling—I really don't think I've ever knowingly lied to an audience.

"COULD AN OUT-LESBIAN HAVE MADE IT?"

Susan: Is there any possibility that the Anti-Nazi movement is just a phase for rock music?

Tom: Yes, I've already had letters from kids saying it did seem a bit anachronistic to see you still chanting on about the National Front. It was all hip cool and trendy last year to go and wave your fist in the air at the Marquee with the Tom Robinson Band. But the achievement will remain, and no-one can take that away, like in 1967 we all believed for four glorious months we were going to change the world—Sergeant Pepper, the whole thing. A lot of people still carry those ideas with them having lived through all that.

Susan: They may have changed a lot in music, but what have they changed for women?

Tom: They have changed nothing for women, and 'Bodies' is a song I want nothing to do with. Punk was a very misogynist movement. 'The Slits'! But what the Sex Pistols did was to turn the whole music business upside down.

Carole: The big recording companies are certainly more open now but it's unlikely that an out lesbian could have got to your position.

Tom: Well, Polly Perkins put out an album of lesbian songs 10 years ago, and is actually making a 'come-back' at the moment. She can do with all the support she can get!!

Susan: There are women who started off singing songs about women and to women like Joan Armatrading, Dusty Springfield, Nina Simone, all of whom have had to back off.

Carole: Yes, at Dusty's recent press interview, everything was kept completely apolitical. She didn't come across with any sexual politics at all.

Susan: But it's not just the recording companies steamrolling women for their sexual politics, is it? Perhaps there are women who just don't choose to spend their lives on the male circuit, because it puts an intolerable strain on the personal/political that they want to work out. Your work must take quite a toll of your personal life.

Tom: I don't have a personal life.

Susan: Won't that in the end make your lyrics sterile?

Tom: I don't actually write lyrics that are personal to me. They're not actually about my own subjective situation.

Susan: I don't mean you'd write songs about affairs, but one whole area of your life as a gay is going to be missing.

Tom: Yes, a whole area of personal commitment. I can't handle a full-scale meaningful relationship and an on-going career. When I come back from six days on the road, with one day free before we go off again, the one thing I want for that day is to be on my own. ★

Tom's new single *Up Against The Wall and LP Power In The Darkness* are due out now.

Lyrics printed with permission of Konkwest Music Limited



MARK RUSHER (IFL)

This story is dedicated to five women suicides, who died between summer 1976 and summer 1977. Sandra, age 23, Isobel, age 80, Lee, age 24, Pauline, age 36, Catherine, age 44.

When I looked out of the window in response to Sandra's ring, her pale face turned up to me in the darkness. It was already after 11, could she have a bath, she asked.

She sat talking in my room. Her long hair was spread over her shoulders to dry. She picked at her life like someone pulling out thorns.

She wrote; "I cannot accept myself for what I am. I am tired of being me."

Outside the crematorium the snow falls briefly on cypress and landscaped grass, the dingy waiting room colder than charity.

When Isobel died they laid her out on the narrow bed and covered her face with a sheet. In the room the silence was like snow. They had brushed her hair back from her face, leaving it free of all vanity. We left two red roses on the white sheets, hoping thus to reach through her resolute absence.

Her body was still bandaged to cover the cancer. I had seen it first and smelled it a month before when she had taken the overdose. She did not know that I gagged so much at the smell of her body that I could not put on the dressing. It was the day they took her to hospital.

The doctor was displeased to be called away from surgery. We sat in the next room and could hear her beg, "Kill me, kill me . . ." She wanted the sanction of his help.

"No!" he shouted at her.

It was the fifth time in three weeks that Lee had turned up at the hospital to have her stomach pumped. The nurses laughed and made fun of her, saying she was hooked on the pump. The doctor sent her carelessly home. That night she drowned in the fluid in her lungs.

Pauline pinned her name to her dress before she jumped, so that there would be no trouble identifying her body. She had a tidy, incisive mind. At home she looked after two small children and read *Oedipus Rex* for the English degree she was doing by correspondence. She remained silent while her husband talked.

I imagine these women standing stiffly, like a Byzantine frieze. I rush to catch buses, catch cold, read theory of women's oppression. Their eyes look past me. Their deaths sever my contact with them.

I am in Marks and Spencer, looking for a skirt and blouse for Isobel. I look for her size. Almost I find myself buying a particularly suitable jacket. I stop myself from buying clothes for a dead woman.

What a coincidence, I say, that in this last year four women I have known, not acquaintances merely, but women that I have known, have chosen to die. And even as I say this the angle of the frieze enlarges, I hear of another death.

Catherine died thirteen years ago in a prison cell in South Africa. She was held in solitary confinement so that the police could extract a statement from her. The tape recordings they had taken of conversations in her flat revealed intimately the guilt she felt for the death of her twin sister. They reviled her for being a Jewess. After three months she crawled on the floor of her cell for fear of the gas crystals she imagined descending from the ceiling and drank the lavatory water because she suspected that she was being poisoned.

She was never called to witness against her friends. When she was released the police recommended that she see a psychiatrist.

I saw her last nine years ago, her hand shaking as she lit yet another cigarette, her arms and legs thin as a Belsen survivor. As we walked in a soft, green English wood, she made small chirping sounds at a little wren in the thicket, a mouse scrambling across dead leaves.

She waited twelve years for her fiancé to be released from prison. He came out old and tired, needing comfort. She had nothing more to give.

Isobel, Sandra, Pauline, Lee, Catherine, your deaths were so womanly: Sandra wrote; "Whoever finds me, forgive me for my selfishness."

Pauline knew the loneliness of motherhood. Literature, that gallery of ancient monuments is hardly appropriate to the kitchen shelf. Men shape in their imagination the world around them, and sing out of tune. Jocasta, a minor part, mother and wife to Oedipus, realises before he does that they have sinned. A man should not sleep with his mother. She hangs herself, so the story goes. At the climax of the play, Oedipus blinds himself, but is sanctified later because of his great suffering. His daughter dedicates her life to looking after her blind father.

Imagine Pauline's hand, thin and tanned; she had dark hair, her body was delicately boned. Imagine her hand writing her name and address and pinning it carefully to her jacket.

She had a choice of names, her father's or her husband's. I wonder whether she thought of this, or whether her name was now nothing more than a posting-box for the body she no longer wanted.

That sickening jump. Now you are alive and standing high, looking down. Go. As you crash through the dimensions of time and space is there still anguish? Others use pain killers to die, thus drowsily entering the gates of death, but maybe even then the dreams are pain.

FIVE WOMEN

by Ann Oosthuizen

Sandra was haunted all her life by a recurring dream. She first dreamed it when she was a five-year-old in hospital with jaundice. She screamed so much the doctors sent her home, preferring to quarantine the entire block in which she lived than cope with her fear.

In the dream she was alone in a room, but became aware that in the far corner crouched a monstrous human who drew her to him by some power he had over her. She knew friends were close by, yet she was certain that they would be unable to help her.

Beyond this creature was darkness. She screamed herself awake so that she could escape from him.

In the last year of her life this dream recurred frequently. She was afraid to go to sleep. The night she left me she found someone else in the street she could talk with until it was light.

I walk past the ruins of the slum she once lived in. Determined that she would have a place which belonged only to her, where no man could throw her out if he grew angry with her or tired of her, she had squatted a flat of her own in a building which would soon come down, where the smell of piss on the landings, the broken glass and dirty, peeling paint discouraged visitors.

Now the outside walls are down; lacerated by the wreckers the soft interior walls show bits of wallpaper or a fireplace hanging in mid-air. I wonder if this was the room she had decorated to die in.

Lee lived in other people's rooms. I took her flowers when

she had the abortion. They were tight, pale daffodils in a narrow bunch. She jerked a smile across her face to hide her terror.

She was returned to Belfast after dying in London. Friends accompanied her. The funeral service was in church (her family was Protestant) where all wept for her brilliant future.

A voluntary exile from her own country, her involvement in left-wing politics and with the men who led them, gave her no more comfort than that dead child.

Sandra was a foster child. She had, by chance, made love to her own brother. He took her to his home where she met her biological mother. She tried, through fairy stories, to create a world which was not governed by caprice, but which had a logic that corresponded to her ideals.

"There stood poor Gerda without shoes or gloves in the middle of the bitter cold of Finland. She ran as fast as she could. A regiment of gigantic snowflakes came against her, but they melted when they touched her, and she went on with fresh courage."

At Sandra's funeral her family huddles together, their sobs rising in a collective crescendo as the coffin disappears theatrically behind a screen of mock marble to the strains of taped *Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring*, no, no, Sandra wails auntie Jean in a groan flawed with self-regard.

I too am tired of being me. I want to be younger, beautiful, bionic, without the weight of these deaths on me. I am chained to an ageing body that bleeds heavily each month. Today I bleed again. Every half hour I change the tampon; it is soggy with blood. If I am lazy, busy, forgetful, the blood seeps through my pants, through my dress, leaving dark stains. The tops of my thighs show water-marks of blood. When I walk I leave drops of crimson on the floor that must be cleaned up with bits of toilet paper or cotton wool. My muscles ache as the blood drains out of my body.

Isobel believed that womanhood is tenderness, generosity, nobility. Sacrifice was necessary, she said, it would not do to complain about it. Each month we bleed for the children waiting to be born.

Yet we are ashamed of this bleeding because the men we love do not bleed like us and find the fluids that come from our bodies disgusting. The Snow Queen does not bleed.

I walk again in the dingy street where Sandra had taken refuge. The building has gone. It is after the wreckers, but before the developers, the office blocks are still on paper. Sandra makes way for the autumn sunlight. We are ashamed of our pain, our misery only adds to the gloom. Don't make a fuss, hide, die.

Isobel woke early in the morning to wash in secret the bandages she used to bind her cancerous sore.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42▶

SHORT LIST

WRITE TO RUTH WALLS GROVE

27 CLERKENWELL CLOSE

LONDON EC1

MEETINGS & CONFERENCES

Conference on Lesbianism

26/27/28 MAY. At Trinity College Dublin. Starting on Friday night with registration (£1) and music. Workshops on Saturday and Sunday on feminism and lesbianism, alternative life styles, bisexuality, women and alcohol, and other related topics. Disco on Saturday evening and revue on Sunday. Food, accommodation, creche available. Details from Gray Cahill, Timmore Cottage, Newcastle, Co. Wicklow, Eire.

Oaklands Women Centre

26 MAY. 7.00 at WAA, 10 Cambridge Terrace Mews, London NW1. Meeting to discuss how to raise money for paying three workers and other ideas for helping Oaklands. "We hope that a firm support group will emerge from that meeting."

Women and Work

7.30 at 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1. Women's Research and Resources Centre History Group.
26 MAY: Ina Ainsworth (Sussex WEA) will talk on *Village Women in Early Victorian Sussex*.
9 JUNE: Sue Clayton (as part of a Film and History project) will talk on *The Clothing Trade in 1840s London* - there will be excerpts from the film being made and discussion on the uses of film in feminist history.
23 JUNE: Robyn Dasey will speak on *Factory Women in late 19th century Hamburg*.

Wessex Gay Women's Conference

27 MAY. Write to the Wessex Gay Women's Group c/o Sappho, The Basement, 20 Dorset Sq, London NW1 with ideas and suggestions. All gay women welcome.

What kind of service can women expect from GPs?

28 MAY. 8.00 discussion at the Everyman Bistro, Hope St, Liverpool, led by two women from the Leeds Women's Health Group.

Women's Resistance in Argentina March

1 JUNE. 5.30 at main entrance of Westminster Abbey. In solidarity with women who march silently every Thursday protesting the disappearance of their relatives under terrorist regime in Argentina. All women in Britain are urged to lend their support on the eve of the World Cup. Details from Women for Argentina Group, 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1 (01-486 4980)

London Anarcho-Feminist Conference

2/3 JUNE. At Camden Women's Centre, Rosslyn Lodge, Lyndhurst Rd, London NW3. Send a s.a.e. for details to Kate Hall, 27 Bridge Ave, London W6.

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital

8 JUNE. 7.30 at EGA, Euston Rd, London NW1. A discussion about breast and cervical cancers with EGA doctors and nurses. All women welcome. Organised by the Well Woman Clinic Committee, c/o Jane Barker, 89 Northdown St, London N1 (01-837-8031).

Bisexuality and the Women's Liberation Movement

10/11 JUNE. At Camden Women's Centre, Rosslyn Lodge, Lyndhurst Rd, London NW3. An exploratory conference for women who have had, are having or think they might like to have 'sexual' relationships with men and women. Possible areas of discussion - problem of rigidly defined sexual identities, politics of bisexuality, problems of being bisexual within the Women's Liberation Movement, and celibacy and closet bisexuality as 'solutions', differences between relating to women and relating to men. Registration £2, £1.50 for claimants. Accommodation and creche provided. Details and registration forms from Geraldine Bush, 29 Teignmouth Rd London NW2 - please send s.a.e.

Domestic Violence Act Conference

10 JUNE. Organised jointly by National Council for Civil Liberties and National Women's Aid Federation, looking at workings of the Act in its first year. Details from NAWF, 51 Chalcot Rd, London NW1.

Women's Voice Rally

10 JUNE. 11.30 at Top Rank Suite, Sheffield. Organised by Women's Voice, women's magazine of Socialist Workers Party. Details from WV Box 82, London E2. 50p.

2nd London Area Women's Liberation Conference

24/25 JUNE. At City University, Northampton Square, London EC1. If you have any ideas for workshops etc. and/or want to be involved in organising the conference write to the Planning Group c/o A Woman's Place, 42 Earlham St, London WC2. Details and registration forms (£1 for weekend if you register by June 14, after that £1.50) from Planning Group. Up-to-date information will be in London Women's Liberation Newsletter (available from A Woman's Place)

South West Regional Women's Liberation Conference

1/2 JULY. At Virginia House, Palace St, Plymouth. Contact Plymouth WL Group at 52 Dale Rd, Mutley, Plymouth if creche or accommodation required. Ideas for workshops welcome.

South East London Women's History Workshop

1 JULY. 2-6 at Goldsmiths College, New Cross, London SE14. All welcome. Details from Goldsmiths SASS 692 0211.

Self Help Therapy Conference

14 to 21 JULY. At Laurieston Hall*. A week for people who have started or would like to start self help therapy groups. Proposed structure: therapy sessions in the mornings, relaxing, gardening, massage, discussions etc. in afternoons, small support groups, therapy sessions in evenings. Details from Catriona at Laurieston Hall - send s.a.e.

CAMPAIGNS

YBA Wife Campaign Conference

3 JUNE. At Queen's Drive Community Centre, Queen's Drive, Nottingham. "Will hopefully result in the Women's Movement taking up this campaign and working to reach married and unmarried women." All women welcome. Creche, food and drinks available. Register in advance (75p). Details from Mary Hughes, 42 Charnwood Fields, Sutton Bonington, Loughborough (05097 2618)

Working Women's Charter National Conference

17/18 JUNE. At Manchester Poly, Cavendish House, Cavendish St, All Saints, Manchester. "Delegates and observers to conference based on support for the campaign and for a fight around its demands." Details from Pat Cross, Flat 2, 49 Spring Bank, Hull (Hull 443 243)

National Anti-Racist, Anti-Fascist Conference

3/4 JUNE. Any Women Against Racism and Fascism, and women's groups active in this field may send two delegates and some observers to conference. Registration forms from ARAFCC, Box 53, 182 Upper St, London N1. Details from North London WARF c/o LSE Women's Group, LSE, Houghton St, London WC1.

Save the EGA!

The EGA desperately needs support (see *Newshorts*). There's a regular picket at the hospital (5-7pm; 7-9pm) which may need to be expanded to 24 hours. Also women's groups etc. can organise branches of the emergency telephone tree - send two contact names and phone numbers to Arthur Churchley (NUPE steward), EGA, Euston Rd, London NW1 (01-387 2501).

ALIST

Women and the Visual Arts Newsletter

A new quarterly newsletter. The first, to be produced in York, will contain personal accounts by women artists, info on events and exhibitions, and reading lists. Please send info, articles, ideas, donations/stamps to Katherine Hamer c/o WIRES, 32a Parliament St, York (0904 35471)

New Clear Energy

8/9 JUNE. At 1.15 pm; dance workshop related to show, Friday 10.30 am Action Space Drill Hall, Chenies St, London WC1. Women duo in dance documentary on nuclear energy. 60p

Katherine Meynell

12 JUNE-1 JULY. At WAA, 10 Cambridge Terrace Mews, London NW1. Exhibition of feminist art.

Laurieston Hall Women's Arts Festival

AUGUST. "We want to contact women artists, theatre groups, musicians, dancers, film-makers etc. who would be interested in performing at our week long festival. Write as soon as possible for details to Women's Arts Festival, Laurieston Hall."

FUNK AND MUSIC

Women and Music Newsletter

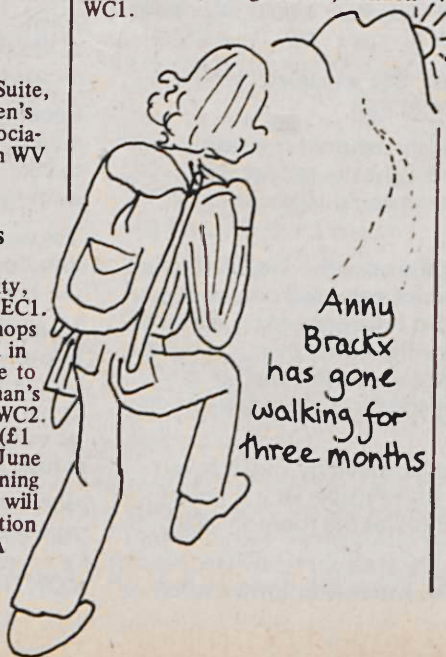
27 MAY. 11.00 at Birmingham Gay Community Centre, 9/10 Bordesley St, Digbeth, Birmingham 5. Meeting to discuss setting up a national women's music newsletter, followed by informal music afternoon/evening - bring songs, instruments etc! Creche, accommodation available. Details from Betty Haggland, 18 Moor Street, Birmingham 4.

Scottish Women's Liberation Carnival

JUNE. Women with silly traits needed for workshops such as roller skating, yoga, writing, food... and anything else you can think of. If interested please contact Women's Liberation Workshop, 160 Fountainbridge, Edinburgh. (031-554 6318).

We apologise for calling Jam Today a rockband in SR 70 - they don't want to be pigeon-holed in that way. The telephone number we gave was wrong; if you want to contact them phone 01-485 2799.

*Laurieston Hall, Castle Douglas, Kircudbrightshire, Scotland.



CENTRES

Women's Arts Alliance

They have just been informed that they are not being recommended for a renewal of their grant from the Arts Council. "Please, we urge all women who support the work we do and would be disappointed to see us go to send us a letter of support/protest that we can use in our contacts with the Arts Council. In solidarity and hope, WAA Collective." WAA, 10 Cambridge Terrace Mews, London NW1.

A Woman's Place

London information centre and home of London newsletter will be homeless in June. It is going to be difficult, if not impossible, to find a place as cheap as 42 Earlham St. Can any women who have any practical suggestions, information, help and money please contact AWP, 42 Earlham Street, London WC2.

Cheltenham Women's Centre

In Spare Rib 70 we mistakenly gave a telephone number for this centre. Please don't ring it!

Lewisham and Deptford Women's Centre

Their number is 01-692 1851, not 1581 as printed in SR 70. Sorry!

PLAYS AND FILMS

She Asked For It

26 MAY. 8.30 at Jackson's Lane Community Centre, 271 Archway Rd, London N6. Grapevine with Rape Crisis Centre present Counter-act in their rape play. £1.

What the Hell is She Doing Here?

Gay Sweatshop (women's company) show with music.
27 MAY Norwich Arts Centre
30 MAY University of Essex, Colchester
9 JUNE Camden NALGO Women's Group (venue to be announced)
11 JUNE Camden Women's Centre, Bisexuality Conference
15 JUNE Thursday to Sunday till July 2. Drill Hall, Chénies St, London WC1. Wednesdays - workshop event; Fridays and Saturdays - extraordinary evenings with women's bands. Details from 01-673 5992 or 01-691 3568.

To Die Among Friends

2/3 JUNE. New Inn Theatre, Ealing, London. Witch Theatre Company in play about relationships by Michelene Wandor.

Monstrous Regiment Floorshow

19 JUNE. 7.30 at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Benefit for the company. £1.50.

Who Needs Nurseries? - We Do!

16mm Cartoon on the need for nurseries (see SR64) is now available from Leeds Animation Workshop, 20 Westminster Buildings, 31 New York St, Leeds (0532 460171) £6 hire if film is returned day after the booking date. To book speaker costs additional £5 plus travelling expenses.

PROJECTS

Women in Manual Trades

"We are a group of women training or working in traditionally male jobs such as building, gardening and mechanics. We are trying to build up a national register which women can use to contact other women doing the same or similar work in their area. We are also collecting information on women's experience in applying for training and jobs. We would be grateful if women who are doing this type of work or who have tried to get into it, could write and tell us about their experience. (We will treat all personal details as confidential.) We are hoping that with this information we can pressurise for better training provisions for women." First newsletter due out in June - contact Lois, Flat 6, 93 Forest Rd, Nottingham. A week of practical skill-sharing is planned - contact Cheryl, Laurieston Hall,* saying what skills you have. Contact address for the North, Tess McMahon, 16 Sholebroke Ave, Leeds 7 and for the South, Suzy Nelson, 21 Bouverie Rd, London N16.

Suffolk Network

Ipswich Women's Liberation Group are trying to start an in-touch network for women in isolated areas of Suffolk. If there are any feminists in rural Suffolk, please contact Ipswich WL Group, c/o 24 Belstead Ave, Ipswich.

BIT Crashpad Service

For people who are evicted/stranded/otherwise unable to find somewhere to sleep. Only a few people in London, and none outside, are offering at the moment to put up people. Would any group or individual who would be prepared to help, especially in putting up women with or without kids, contact BIT, 97a Talbot Rd, London W11 (01-229 8219)

PUBLICATIONS

How To Get An Injunction

"Women! You don't have to put up with being battered." Everything you need to know about getting injunctions against men who beat up the women they live with, step-by-step and colour-coded to be readable in emergencies. Published jointly by the National Women's Aid Federation and Manchester Law Centre.*

Working Class Women's Liberation Newsletter

Second issue is now out. From Judy Moloney, 199a Manningham Lane, Bradford 8. 20p, or £1 for 6 issues. Next issue will be done by North London Working Class Women's Group - details in newsletter.

Women at WAR, Women Against Rape

Some of the pieces in this extended booklet on rape are less manufactured to fit the 'wages for housework' solution than others. The experiences of individual women come across more powerfully than the theory, which is a bit jumbled. I like the fact that WAR repeatedly make the point that women have been fighting back in various ways for a long time, but I do wish they wouldn't make it sound as if they, WAR, were responsible for everything anyone inside or outside the Women's Liberation Movement has achieved.*

'Action Opportunities', in case you haven't heard of it, is an organisation chaired by Baroness Sear, which is "intended to have only a limited life in which, by an intensive information programme, it will bring home to women the practical implications of the new rights which recent legislation has given them".

It was set up after a meeting called by the Fawcett Society in 1974 to launch a 'non-political' ginger-group on equal opportunities (in fact, it is predominantly Liberal). Since then, Action Opportunities has received money from the EEC social fund (through the Old Boys network they confess) and from the EOC. Their main product so far is a cartoon strip - 'The story of Linda Pritchard and how she learned to make the most of equal opportunities for men and women'. (Says Linda: "If I can manage, so can you!")

The style is similar to that of true-love-and-romance comics, though the message is different. Unfortunately, in the first few pages, Linda is repeatedly rescued by a man (husband Derek leaves her, old friend Bill steps in...) which hardly challenges the stereotype of damsel in distress. This damsel, however, with a little help from her boy-friends, achieves equal pay (backdated!), buys a flat on a mortgage and furniture on hire purchase (equal access to credit facilities, see?) and ends up advising all her girlfriends about equal opportunities. The comic may be useful for teaching - you can get it for 10p (plus postage) from Action Opportunities, 17 Denbigh Terrace, London W11. Also, for 5p, you can get their leaflet on Industrial Tribunal Procedure - again useful, but rather turgid.

Jenny Earle, Rights of Women

Guide to Gay Custody

Presenting yourself as the ideal Marks and Spencer lady, and watch-

ing stoically as your dearest friend is done over in court: all part of the lesbian's struggle for her kids. As a timely reminder that custody cases grind on, even though AID is not hot media stuff any more, Action For Lesbian Parents have brought out a booklet full of practical and legal advice. 20p from ALP, 72 Highbury Park, London N5.

Susan Hemmings

The Second Wave

The title of this five-year old American feminist magazine was chosen "to remind us that our movement started over a century ago and that we are in the second wave of feminists in an ongoing struggle."

In issue 1 (vol 5) Yvonne Wanrow, a native American who killed a white childmolester, describes her fight against male power structures. And in an open letter to the 'tame' US Anti-Rape Movement, three Santa Cruz women expose the function, and challenge the process of the same criminal justice system. This line of thought is followed through in a well-argued piece tracing radical feminism back to its anarchist roots. But by far the most stimulating is the article on how 'agribusiness' is making the tough US farming woman into an urban-style homemaker or a bottom-of-the-pile assembly line worker.

Available at \$1 + postage from *The Second Wave*, Box 344 Cambridge A, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139, US.

Anny Brackx

Des Femmes en Mouvements

This French monthly feminist magazine which started in January is thought-out, written and produced by the 'Politique et Psychanalyse' collective. What is striking is their concern with language/words: "often they inform us, are pointers, put us on the track..." Form and content are flowing/poetic, and true to the title we get a thorough feel of women everywhere on the move/ changing/organising. Available at 7FF + postage from *Des Femmes en Mouvements*, 70 Rue des Saints-Peres, 75009 Paris, France.

AB

*Indicates publications are available from the Publication Distribution Co-op, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

classified work offered

► **AFTER SIX HOUSING ADVISORY SERVICE.** 1 HOUSING ADVISER to work in a non-hierarchical team, along with 6 other Housing Advisers, a Researcher and an Administrator/Coordinator, operating a 24-hour telephone answering service, giving advice and information to the single homeless and childless couples and participating in research and special projects. All salaries £3609, under review. Apply for job description and application form to After Six, 48 William IV Street, London WC2N 4LS. Tel 240 2353. Closing date for applications: Wednesday 7th June 1978.

● **WOMEN'S THEATRE** ● GROUP need experienced musicians and performers to start MID-JUNE. £52 p.w., write 27 Stepney Green, London E1, enclosing SAE and phone no.

► **SCARP STUDENT COMMUNITY ACTION RESOURCES PROJECT.** A new information, research and resources centre for Student Community Action (SCA) groups and related projects throughout the student movement set up by the existing SCA network, starting in July and grant funded. **REQUIRES A FOURTH CO-WORKER**, to be based in London. It would be useful to have experience of Student Community Action work, or related work, over a wide range, including dealing with inequalities and discrimination in the community in terms of sex, race, class, health and age. Salary £3225 p.a. (incremental scale being worked out for future) plus travelling expenses. Closing date for applications is May 30th * and the person appointed would need to start before September 20th. Further details from A. Thompson, SCARP, c/o UMIST Union, PO Box 88, Sackville Street, Manchester M60 1QD. * This is flexible, but we hope to short-list by June 10th.

► **Rushcliffe Women's Aid** need refuge worker. 30 hour, £2700 p.a. Scope for own initiative. Details c/o 57 Cambridge Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham. Closing date 7 June.

► **ILLUSTRATOR NEEDED.** Rape Crisis Centre needs illustrations for comic strip leaflet for schools in Modest y Blaise/Jacky style. We cannot afford high rates. If interested write to RCC, PO Box 42, London N6 sending sample of your work.

► **BROADSIDE MOBILE WORKERS' THEATRE** requires 1. Versatile musician (acting ability an advantage) 2. Versatile actor. Both full time. Both must be socialists. Long term commitment. Write 58 Holbein Place, London SW1. Phone 01-450 6992/01-730 5396.

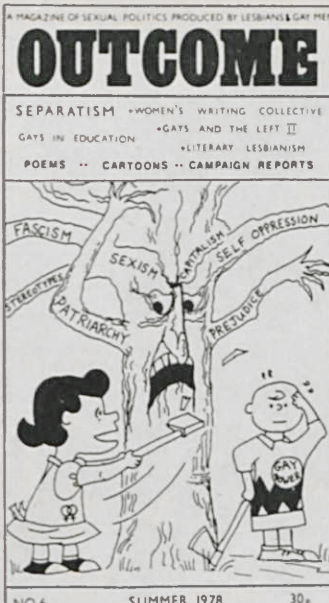
► **Two energetic feminist play workers** needed to work in Islington Women's Aid refuge. Driving licence essential. Hours 21 + per week, flexible. Some weekend and evening work. £2000 gross per annum. Apply in writing to Islington Women's Aid, c/o 161 Homsey Road, London N7

► **STOCKPORT WOMEN'S AID** refuge needs a WORKER (Part-time -20 hours per week) from August. Salary Nalگو AP3 pro rata. Apply in writing with CV and details of experience, if any, to Jenny Lazarus, 51 Heaton Road, Heaton Moor, Stockport.

Blackrose Press is a libertarian-communist/feminist printing collective. We are looking for a fourth worker, preferably with some experience. Blackrose Press, 30 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1. 01-251 3043.

► **LIVERPOOL SELF-HELP BUILDING PROGRAMME.** Work alongside trained craftsmen in all aspects of the building trade. Some work on publications/photography/games/workshops. Sharing in all work including housekeeping. Hard work... long hours. Accommodation provided, and food if staying a month or more. Small wage negotiable after six months. **THE BLACKIE/GREAT GEORGE STREET, LIVERPOOL 1.** TELEPHONE 051 709 5109.

publications



► **WOMEN'S LIBERATION LITERATURE** or any books. Send SAE for free booklist to H Rutovitz, 31 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh.

► **DISCOVER MATRIARCHY** through reincarnation memory. Other women's experiences plus do-it-yourself instructions. 75p from Silver Chalice, 40 St John St, Oxford.

SPECIAL OFFER FOR SPARE RIB READERS. See page 9 for special offer and discount on new book of fifteen feminist short stories. **TALES I TELL MY MOTHER**

► **Nature cures without side-effects!** Self-help, health books and herbals. 2 x 7p stamps for book catalogue. Allbooks, 871 Victoria Road, Ruislip, Middlesex.

general services

► **TO FIND FRIENDSHIP** advertise for yourself with an ideal advert derived from your horoscope. **LARGE HOROSCOPES FOR FRAMING.** HOROSCOPES with careers advice for young people etc. **DISCOUNTS** for multi-form and numbers. SAE for price list to **COUPLANDS ASTROGEN SERVICES, BOX 14, HARROGATE, NORTH YORKSHIRE.**

► **Visiting Edinburgh?** Sit, chat, read or buy feminist & socialist literature at the First of May bookshop, 45 Niddry St (off High St), Edinburgh, 031 557 1348. Open 12-6pm.

► **Light removals**—£1.50 per hour plus 5p per mile. Phone Sheila 808 3457.

► **PAINTING AND DECORATING**—professionally done at reasonable rates. Phone Lesley 01-359 1762.

wanted

► We would now like to have two women in the shop all the time, especially on Saturdays and 5-6 pm weekdays. If you can help out, even for an hour or two regularly every fortnight, please phone or come and see us. The Corner Bookshop, 162 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds 2 (Leeds 454 125).

publications

► **WIRES (WOMEN'S INFORMATION, REFERRAL AND ENQUIRY SERVICE)** is the Women's Liberation Movement national information service, and also produces a twice-monthly newsletter. This contains news of conferences, events, meetings, campaigns, and other activities of the WLM; nationwide news, information and news from groups, as well as articles on feminist art, health, international etc—plus reviews, letters and so on. Office opening times are: Monday to Friday 10.30-4.30. Write to us or telephone if you have a query and **SUBSCRIBE to WIRES.** Sub rates: £6 a year (£4 if poor); group rates: £12 a year (£8 if poor) for 2 copies of each issue. Individual copies at 20p each. Copies are also available on a sale-or-not-pay basis.

► **THE COMING AGE:** magazine of the Goddess religion, 35p. 40 St John St, Oxford.

► **GAIA'S GUIDE 1978, FOR GAY WOMEN.** All new, revised, updated and greatly expanded thoroughly detailed handy pocket size international lesbian bar/club guide and complete directory. This fifth edition: 35 countries/4000 listings. Centres, switchboards, bookstores/mail order houses, publications, services and much, much more. £2.00 only (£2.50 overseas) from **GAIA'S GUIDE**, one North End Rd, London W14 (discreet mail order only—fast delivery). Also on sale at **THE GATEWAYS** and **STERLING'S BOOKSTORES**, 57 St Martin's Lane, London WC2.

► **Sappho lesbian/feminist magazine** 50p including post. Basement, 20 Dorset Square, LONDON NW1. Meetings Tuesdays 7.30pm. Chepstow Pub, Chepstow Place, London W2.

work wanted

► **Feminist student** wants voluntary work, two to four months, June onwards. Keep or money for same required. Jane Ashley, 17 Bridge Road, Epsom, Surrey.

► **Graduate (Education)** feminist seeks work in Scotland. Skills/experience—educational research, medical auxiliary work, work with physically/mentally handicapped, experienced driver, year's work in Italy, office skills. Box 713.

► **Woman trying to set up slide/tape workshop** would like to help produce work for campaigns to gain experience. Phone 808 3457.

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Paris £10.50
Athens £25
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spare Rib

Needs another woman to join the collective on a fulltime basis, unfortunately on very low pay.

We work collectively, but each of us have specific areas that we are responsible for.

We need someone to work at getting the magazine much more widely distributed in trade outlets around the country, and to produce our bimonthly regional page. It involves frequent trips all over Britain to local Women's Groups and to wholesalers and retailers. A driving licence would help.

If this job sounds good to you write to Ruthie & Carole at: Spare Rib, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

WHAT EVERY WOMAN SHOULD KNOW ABOUT VIBRATORS

As the first company to introduce vibrators into the U.K. and having sold some hundred of thousands, we feel that we know more about them and their use than most.

The most important thing to remember is, **that they do work** — providing the woman has no violent prejudice against the use of artificial sexual stimulation. Some women find the shape off-putting. The phallic symbolism, deliberately created by the makers to emphasize its sexual usage, gives them the impression that it is meant to be used as an artificial penis, and indeed it can and is so used. Some women, however, find the effect — when used in this way — to be more numbing than stimulating.

The vibrator is designed and is far more effective when used for clitoral stimulation and its undoubted value for this purpose has been well established by Masters and Johnson in their book "An Analysis of Human Sexual Response." In the book they describe how, using a similar device, they were able to bring to orgasm women who have never before reached a climax.

These were extreme cases obviously. Normally, the vibrator is used to provide extra stimulation during love making and is particularly useful where the woman's response tends to be slow. And, of course, it is just as often used purely for personal pleasure.

Finally a word about quality. There are many different makes on the market today, all of similar design, ranging in quality from very good to absolutely useless. We have been selling the same model for seven years and have enough confidence in it to offer you our special money refund service if you are not satisfied.

If you want to experiment with your own personal vibrator, just complete the coupon below.

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1a West Green Road, London, N.15

Classified contacts

- ▶ Enfield Nursery Campaign meet at 8.00 the first Monday of each month at the Red Cross Centre, Green Lanes, Palmers Green. New members welcome. Contact Tina 01-886 5373.
- ▶ Anyone interested? Feminist/Socialist couple want to join/start communal farming venture. Main aims are shared child-care, shared responsibility, self-sufficiency. Pat & Mark Box 711.
- ▶ Feminist woman and man looking to start/join a housing collective/co-operative Clapham area for home birth of first baby early September. Lesley, Slough 74807.
- ▶ 2 outgoing, friendly lesbians, 20s, want to meet similar. London. Box 710.
- ▶ CHESTER CHE WELCOMES WOMEN. Meet us 8.30pm Helanies Club any Sunday or call at the office any evening after 7.30pm 7A Bridge Street, Chester.
- ▶ ARE YOU SEEKING nationwide female contacts etc. Long standing, sincere and discreet service. Send SAE or stamp to 'Ariadne', The Golden Wheel, Liverpool L15 3HT.
- ▶ Homosexual? Lesbian? So are we. Try phoning London Friend to talk about it, any evening between 7.30 and 10pm on 01-359 7371.
- ▶ Lady seeks non-smoking gentle sister for close friendship, every day living, platonic if preferred. Box 718.
- ▶ CHRISTIAN FEMINISTS who want to exchange ideas or form local groups contact Box 719.
- ▶ GAY AND IN NALGO? Then join Nalgay, the Nalgo Gay Group. SAE for details from 7 Pickwick Court, West Park, London SE9.
- ▶ FOREIGN man sought by British woman wanting marriage Box 720.
- ▶ Teacher planning O level women's studies course seeks support. Contact Liz Waugh, 191 Grove Rd, London E17 for outline syllabus.
- ▶ ROMAN CATHOLIC feminists unite! 01-886 0779. Box 699.

for sale

- ▶ BABYSLINGS. Lightweight, strong, safe. Wear front or back leaving hands free. £4.20. Money back guarantee. Barbara Trynor, 18 Spring Street, Ripponden, Nr Halifax, Yorks.

groups

Note: New reduced classified ad rates for sisters looking for or starting local women's liberation groups. 5p/word; 7p/capitals; 30p box numbers.

- ▶ PETERBOROUGH area. I would like to join or form a lesbian/feminist group. Box 712.
- ▶ MILL HILL AREA Feminist CR groups looking for new members. Phone Lynne 959 7583.
- ▶ ISLINGTON woman wishes to join or form women's group. Phone Angela 272 2802 evenings.
- ▶ Kidderminster area. Woman with children wishes to contact similar, or group. Phone Sue, Kidderminster 66198.
- ▶ NEW CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING GROUP STARTING IN ISLINGTON/HACKNEY AREA: also including Clapton/Stoke Newington, Dalston. Any women interested please ring Chris 607 8360 (eves) or Marj 986 7238 (eves).
- ▶ WOMEN IN DURHAM. We meet regularly on a bi-monthly basis. For further details contact Gaelle, 23 Railway St, Langley Park, Durham. Tel. Durham 731889.
- ▶ Feminist contacts in WORCESTER needed. Evenings out with a view to group. Write Gena, Dilys, Hilary, Flat 2, 111 Church Street, Great Malvern, Malvern, Worcs.
- ▶ MANCHESTER. I want to join or form a socialist feminist group. Please call Penny Bould (days) 061 225 8833 from May 30th.

therapy/growth

- ▶ MASSAGE THERAPY increases body awareness, promotes relaxation, well-being and the natural self-healing process of the body. Neo-reichian approach. Simoma AF Phys tel 01-272 8620.
- ▶ INNER LIBERATION. We are an active work study and meditation community based on Tibetan Buddhist practice. May all beings find the joy of their true potential. Please write to Manjushri Institute, Conishead Priory, Ulverston, Cumbria or telephone 0229 54019.
- ▶ MASSAGE THERAPY Esalen, Swedish, Shaitzu, Reflexology. For healing injuries, aches and pains, promoting good health, relaxation, body/mind awareness. Kate 01-450 3038.
- ▶ Woman psychotherapist (Jungian) tel 01-348 5593 preferably before 10am.

COPYDATE 2 JUNE FOR PUBLICATION 21 JUNE

Rates 10p per word, 15p caps, £1.50 for semi-display (semi-boxed ad), 60p for Box Number.

New reduced rates for local women's liberation groups, 5p per word, 7p caps, 30p box numbers.

Payment: Ads must be prepaid by cheque or PO. Make payable to SPARE RIBS LTD. Send to: SPARE RIB CLASSIFIED, 27 CLERKENWELL CLOSE, LONDON EC1R 0AT. Conditions: Spare Rib reserves the right to refuse any classified ads.

Tick if Box No. required.

Tick if Semi-Display required.

I enclose £ for no of issues.

NAME

ADDRESS

accom wanted

► **SOCIALIST FEMINIST, MANCHESTER 23**, seeks room(s) in communal house/flat urgently. Penny Bould 01-675 1545 or from May 30th (days) 061 225 8833.

► We're looking for others to buy house in the Wirral, share child-care, organic gardening. Interested? Contact Jane & Charlie, Newington, Holywood, Dumfries.

► Mature business lady requires long-term furnished bed-sitter, full cooking facilities, water. Good references available. Clapham area preferred or willing share flat. Box 715.

► Non-sexist, female, early thirties, seeks share in accommodation. London Box 716.

► Woman wishes to share in mixed house with children. SE London Box 717.

► Woman, daughter 2½ years, need somewhere to live. Would share preferably in London. S. Relf, 34 Cowper Road, W3.

► Woman musician, gay, vegetarian, needs room with others anywhere London. Phone Su 01-444 0411.

► **COMMUNAL house?** Feminist and son desperately need home with SENSITIVE people and kids. Share everything. Val 01-769 4858.

► **URGENT woman and child**, 4 years, desperately need accommodation in Westminster area. Phone Carole at Spare Rib 253 9793 or 624 5343. ■

courses

► **'Women's Rights'**—A Summer School 12th-18th August at Wedgwood Memorial College Barlaston Village, near Stoke-on-Trent. Tutor: Pam Bowmer & Netta Pinnock. A meaningful holiday course in pleasant surroundings with congenial company. Brochure and application form from: Secretary above address.

► **PELLIN CENTRE LONDON** Fourth women's workshop Friday June 2nd—Sunday 4th. For women interested in therapy and radical change. Led by ANNA FARROW Cost £8 01-946 1430 or 01-946 1742

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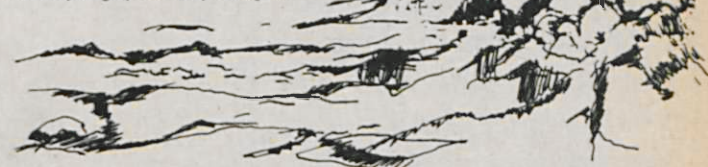
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JOBSHARING

Childcare is a constant problem for women, which is why many cannot take on full-time paid work.

For those who want the benefits of part-time work without the insecurities, jobsharing may provide a solution.

For further information or a leaflet on *How to sell yourself as a Jobsharer* contact Adrienne Boyle, North Lewisham Law Centre, 171 Deptford High Street, London SE8.



Jobsharing is a particular variation of part-time work: two people choose to apply jointly for one full-time job, and subsequently share one workload and divide the pay up between them. By monitoring, criticising, and supporting each other they can bring a high degree of quality to the job.

It can be a perfect way to work, as well as spend time with the kids and/or pursuing other interests. Its advantage over straight part-time is that you are protected under the Employment Protection Act * (which you aren't if you do a part-time job of less than 16 hours a week), that you can move up the promotion and therefore wage ladder, and that someone else shares all the problems with you. National insurance, holidays, tax etc are all split down the middle or are pro-rata. The employer has slightly more administration to do ie paying sets of insurance and tax but this is by far outweighed by the advantage of having two lots of energy and expertise for the price of one.



Susie Parsons who shares a housing worker's job with Eddie Adams at the N. Kensington Law Centre in London, found that she and Eddie, with whom she had previously worked, had both applied for the same job. They decided to make a joint application, solving a child care problem they both had. They work with Tenants Associations and other Community Groups, servicing them, giving advice, sometimes taking cases to court, immigration work. They have set up a creche in which they both look after three children when they are not actually doing their paid job. Their week is somewhat like this—Susie works two full days alone while Eddie is in the creche, and Eddie does the last two days while Susie does the creche. They have a day in the middle when they meet together for a staff meeting. On this middle day one of the children's Dads runs the creche. "A few of the other workers," says Susie "had doubts at first but everyone seems happy now. We have to be very flexible, so as not to confuse people. So if an emergency comes up and the relevant person is doing the creche we have to deal with it or swap round quickly." She feels that the Law Centre is getting pretty good

value in terms of commitment and energy, so all round it's a good deal.



Ines Newman and Marjorie Mayo also applied jointly for one job as research workers for the Joint Dockland Action Group, which is a Federation of 6 local community groups concerned with the future of Docklands in London. They were interviewed jointly and were offered the one job. They started by splitting the week, and doing 2½ days in the office each. But being out of the office for whole days at a time made co-ordination of roles more difficult both for themselves as jobsharers and the full-time workers. So they changed hours to working 5 mornings each (and evenings when necessary) and therefore the same hours, which gave them both a better idea of each other's work and what was going on in the office. "Ideally," Marjorie says "one needs the flexibility to do either 5 half days or 2½ days together." They each specialise to some extent but know enough about each other's work to be able to stand in.

They decided to jobshare because they both found that they had no job security as part-timers and that with job cuts their respective futures were very insecure. They also found that they were excluded from taking responsibility in the running of their departments and that when they were overloaded with work they were in a very weak position to refuse. "Job-sharing" said Ines "also offers considerably more flexibility than a part-time job. We have helped look after each other's children . . . We have covered for each other when a particular meeting clashes with domestic arrangements and we have been able to work our choice of hours. We also find that as jobsharers we are fully involved in the organisational policy decisions of the Joint Dockland Action Group, which encourages far greater job satisfaction." Ines and Marjorie stressed how important it was, especially in the initial stages of jobsharing for the other workers to be flexible and patient—this has combined to make whole teams successful in working together. "I personally believe that I gain invaluable support and stimulation by the exchange of ideas. The contrast is enormous especially when you consider the typical problems of part-timers who can so easily become isolated and

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even be made to feel peripheral to the whole organisation . . . For me personally," Marjorie concludes "it provides the best possible solution to my conflicting demands—wanting to be as fully involved as possible in my job and with my children."

Their employers too seem fully satisfied with the jobshare in practice. "Both have made their contributions to the job," said Maura Rafferty from the Management Committee. "Jobsharing has proved extremely useful when it is necessary to have an extra person around. But it is vital for the employer to adopt a flexible approach to hours worked and to judge the job by results rather than by attendance in the office between regular hours."



Carole and Steve Davies recently negotiated sharing a job as field officers on a tiny island in the Indian Ocean, to develop a useful volunteer programme for the International Voluntary Service (IVS). Nigel Watt, the acting Secretary-General of IVS said "It was the first couple we have employed in this way . . . We have now given the whole idea of jobsharing a bit more thought and might consider it for our own offices here in Leicester or anywhere else for that matter. In fact we are having discussions with our Yorkshire Field Office at the moment about the possibility of sharing, not with his wife but with someone else, who for his own reasons also wants a part-time job. I think it is a lot easier though to do this in a field of administration of voluntary work, or in community or social work generally . . ."

Again, Carole and Steve's job was advertised as one, and they put in a joint application. They work from a room in their house, dividing up the work between them, each taking the areas they best feel able to tackle, and each taking turns looking after Tom, their young son. "The flexibility suits us both down to the ground. We can, for instance, both work one day and then feel justified taking the morning off to travel or laze with Tom" says Carole. "In theory there's always one of us free to be with Tom, though this is shared a lot with the Comorian family next door."

Many different types of employers operate different types of jobsharing.

Most Fostering Officers for Westminster Social Services are jobsharers; some academics at Lancaster University are; so are some clerical workers at the National Westminster Bank, and housing workers for the borough of Haringey; even the House of Commons has been operating a jobshare arrangement since November 1972 in their Library. There are many other companies who call variations of part-time work 'jobsharing', eg places like Barclays Bank, Friends Provident Life Office and others who operate an alternate week or fortnight system, Thorn Electronics who operate a morning/afternoon shift pair. But the jobs don't seem to be sharing anything except in the case of Thorn Electronics where workers swap childcare.

There are however some notes of warning which every potential job sharer should be aware of. An unscrupulous employer could try to get around the Employment Protection Act * by offering hours less than 16 to each individual, s/he could attempt to load 1½ jobs instead of one, and could generally make jobsharing as intolerable as part-time. Thorn Electronics, for example, paid full-timers for tea breaks but not jobsharers; Lancaster University automatically terminates both contracts if one half of the jobshare gives notice.

There has been a great deal of interest in the idea of jobsharing in the last couple of years. The Equal Opportunities Commission, various

unions, the Association of Community Workers, Health Workers at Glasgow University, the Manpower Society (independent association of senior personnel officers), the Manpower Services Commission (governmental agency set up to train/retrain people), Michael Shanks, former Social Affairs Minister in the EEC and Director Designate of the National Consumer Council, the TUC, Inner London Education Authority Careers Service for Women and Girls, and others, have been discussing the issues involved.

The Manpower Services Commission has recommended more research and promotion into the idea. They recommend it because they say output per unit (ie per job) would increase . . . Their idea of jobsharing however seems to have remained at the stage of shorter hours, longer holidays, earlier retirement rather than the qualitative sharing of individual jobs. The Manpower Society is talking about jobsharing in its debate about how to share 24 million jobs between 25½ million people. The TUC itself includes worksharing as part of their policy on reducing employment but currently doesn't seem to be doing a great deal about promoting it. Local and national levels of NALGO, NUPE, and ACTSS have and are being pressed to accept jobsharing as part of relevant union policy. Reaction in the unions has been one of interest and keenness but not as much promotion is given to the idea as was hoped for.

As a result of the various discussions a Women Community Workers Conference last year formulated a list of demands for jobsharers:

- 1 In principle all posts should be open to jobsharers as well as full-time employees (with the exception in certain areas such as very small voluntary bodies).
- 2 Full-time workers should have the right to switch to jobsharing without loss of status, security, fringe benefits etc. The employer would then be obliged to advertise the resultant post. In the present context of cuts in public expenditure, the provision of opportunities for jobsharing must not be used as a pretext for cutting down on overall staffing levels.
- 3 All jobsharers should have full job security under the Employment Protection Act, and comparable pro-rata pay and conditions including fringe benefits, holidays, annual increments etc.
- 4 Jobsharers should not have lower status and responsibilities than comparable full-time workers.
- 5 All major decision-making meetings (eg team meetings) should be held when jobsharers and others can attend easily.
- 6 Facilities should be made available to trade unions so that branch meetings can take place at convenient places to the majority including jobsharers.

* The Employment Protection Act (1975) deals with industrial relations and it establishes in law certain rights for trade unions and individual workers.

FORUM

We received so many letters about the National Women's Liberation Conference, held in Birmingham on April 9 (SR 70), and so many responses to our first 'forum' on therapy (SR 69), that we decided to give over this 'forum' entirely to a selection of readers' letters.

The seven demands are listed on page five

Conference

Dear sisters,

It was my first conference and I wasn't prepared for its scale and intensity. I think the Birmingham women did more than their best to organise it and I hope they are not too demoralised by the plenary. When I left it, at 4.30, I was very freaked out and depressed by what happened. I thought it could be the end of the movement or at least a serious split.

We talked about it on the way back to Durham, and I was able to clarify my thoughts quite a bit. It was pointed out that although these scenes are heavy to go through for everyone (I'm thinking about our lesbian sisters feeling ripped off and reacting aggressively), they are necessary: every revolutionary minority has to create chaos and confusion as a first step, to be recognised and heard (to the detriment, unfortunately, of other minorities—as seen in the plenary).

Two suggestions: Since the movement is getting so big and it gets so hard to organise a national conference, I think it might be better to organise regional conferences once or twice a year and then have delegates from the regions get together for the final decisions (a mini-plenary!). A lot of trust is needed for this process but I think we can do it.

For a big gathering, which is important politically and emotionally, I think a summer festival would be a great idea—with feminist groups, plays, artists, creches etc. What do you think?
Gaelle Finley,
Langley Park,
Durham.

Dear sisters,

The conflicts (at the plenary) revolved around the differing analyses of the politics of our oppression that exist within the movement. These were highlighted and brought out by the debate on the seventh demand.

The Revolutionary Feminist Group seem to see the dynamics of our oppression as reducible purely to the social relations of patriarchy. In other words it is men *per se* who are the enemy. Given the biologicistic basis of their analysis, the liberation of both men and women together is a contradiction in terms since the interests of men and women are ultimately mutually

exclusive. Therefore it is only by destroying the oppressive relation of men over women, with women taking control, that women will be liberated. Thus the only priority of the women's movement should be the destruction of male supremacy. This seemed to us anyway the basic political logic behind their amendment to the seventh demand (*"Male violence against women is an expression of male supremacy and political control of women"*) and their suggestion that the six demands be abolished.

Obviously, as socialist feminists, we think that capitalist social relations (which are not necessarily synonymous with patriarchal social relations) and therefore the state, also play a decisive role in maintaining and perpetuating our oppression; that, therefore, a class analysis can help us understand *certain* areas of our oppression; and that our liberation is involved with that of all other oppressed people, including men. But what the specific relations are between patriarchy and capitalism is something we are only beginning to understand.

Many of us are new to the movement and all of us are ready to admit that we are unaware of (a) how oppressed we really are, and in what ways, (b) the nature of the internal and external dynamics perpetuating our oppression and (c) the reasons behind all the internal politics of the WLM! What we do believe, however, is that communication with other sisters is essential, that the Revolutionary Feminist Group, other radical feminists, in fact, other *feminists*, all have crucial insights and analyses on our oppression.

Our development will be less if we don't hear these points of view vocally, in a non-oppressive way, at day events, regional and national conferences. We left Birmingham wondering whether instead of the movement having differences of opinion within its ranks, it had irretrievable splits blocking communication. The only way out of these dilemmas is by further cross-fertilisation of ideas, not silence. We need to work out our ideas more specifically. It is easy to be negative about other points of view, but not so easy to put forward well thought out alternatives; easy to criticise the crude methods of communication employed at the end of the plenary, but yet another matter to devise open, flexible communication that actually does achieve something at the end of the day. But this we ob-

viously need to do. In the meantime, sisters, please write!
Clapham Socialist Feminist
Tuesday Group,
c/o Women's Centre,
45 North St, London SW4.

To the Women's Liberation Movement
c/o Spare Rib

Although not active in the movement I'm a committed feminist and struggle every day in my work environment (as a secretary) socially and personally against role stereotyping. As I live in Birmingham I went along to the plenary session accompanied by two friends—another friend (Karen) attended the workshop sessions the previous day. We were all making our first real contact with the movement and hoped to experience an atmosphere of warmth, support and solidarity to help us to continue with our individual struggles and to encourage us to become active in the movement. Instead we felt the atmosphere to be alienating and threatening.

Karen experienced a thinly veiled attack for the apparently unforgivably anti-feminist act of wearing a skirt. Have we all struggled to shed the old suffocating 'sex object' stereotype only to be presented with an equally rigid image which we must force ourselves into in order to be accepted as sisters?

I had understood that we were striving for women to be accepted as a new, free, non-stereotyped human being; not doing the oppressor the honour of aping his dress, mannerisms and worst behavioural characteristics. The discussion on violence of all kinds perpetrated by men on women was constantly disrupted by bullying and intimidation by one section of the women present.

This is allowed to happen by the rest of the women due to their deliberate policy of non-organisation and structure, which obviously results in those with the loudest voices dominating the proceedings; all in the name of some naive, half-baked idealistic attempt to preserve something they dupe themselves into believing is democracy; but in fact effectively ensures that the movement doesn't expand and can therefore continue to be used simply for the selfish exploration and analysis of their own psyches.

As one of the 'ordinary' women I'm always hearing that the movement is trying to attract—the threatening stances, arrogant posturings and self-indulgent introspection I and my friends witnessed at conference have ensured that none of us will ever try to establish contact with the movement again. I'm only glad I failed to persuade more of my friends to attend. Friends whose commitment to feminist ideas is not yet as total as that of the four of us who did go—whose basic belief is miraculously unshaken by the experience.

So go home sisters, with your newly polished raised consciousness, and have no fear. There's no danger that the purity and idealism of your movement will ever be sullied by massive influxes of typists, housewives, factory workers, etc.

Ann Lee, Birmingham

Dear sisters,
This letter is written in the hope that it will initiate a discussion within the movement. This will be necessary if any group is going to be willing to organise another national conference in the light of what happened in Birmingham. Sisters who attended the plenary at this year's conference will have had a first hand demonstration of how a small group of disruptive and vocal women were able to ruin an important and potentially exciting discussion. We cannot understand the politics of women who say the movement is for all women but who act in a way that will alienate even the most committed.

Do we want the women's movement to be outgoing and to grow? If we do, then we must ensure that our movement is broad enough to accommodate differences. There can be disagreements about both tactics and priorities. However, at some level there must be a basis for agreement and this is one important aspect of our demands and is one very good reason for keeping them. The importance of the Women's Liberation Movement is that it *unites* issues such as lesbianism and equal pay within the general analysis of women's oppression. We should help one another, not just selfishly claim all the energy, time and attention for our own particular priority.

If even this goodwill is lacking then we have to ask the question: can it be created or should we go our separate ways? However, the dangers for everybody of splitting the movement are obvious. We must ask whether we are willing to let a small disruptive minority force a split which many of us don't want. The majority of women must start voicing their views—we have been too apologetic for too long. Women Against Racism and Fascism, Women's Therapy Centre, Rights of Women, Fifth Demand Group, Lesbian Left, LSE Women's Group.

Extracts from Brighton Women's Liberation Group's proposal to split the sixth demand, accepted at the conference:

(The sixth demand: *An end to all discrimination against lesbians and the right of all women to define their own sexuality.*)

1) We see the sixth demand as the lesbian demand, and the second half obscures the force of this. Also the two statements together alter the meaning of each. The right to define our own sexuality is seen as sexual preference, ie who you choose to sleep with or not, rather than how you relate to yourself and others. A lesbian demand in its own right covers areas of struggle including possible legislation on AID, custody, discrimination in jobs etc. It also gives political validity to lesbianism as a chosen lifestyle.

2) We think a women-defined sexuality is not a demand but rather a basic principle/premise/assumption underlying the ideology of the WLM. Therefore it could be tacked on to any or all of the other demands.

3) We can see the demands as potential focuses for campaigns to change specific areas of legislation, ie demands made of the state (men). The second part of

All letters have been cut for reasons of space and repetition.

the sixth demand is not a demand in this sense. The redefinition of our own sexuality is part of a power struggle to redefine our own lives. It is a struggle which *all* women are constantly engaged in.

We feel it is about time we clarified all the demands, so that their political content is explicitly stated. For instance, people may agree with free nurseries or abortion for any number of reasons, which could even be non-feminist or anti-women. We propose that the feminist ideology underlying the demands should be made explicit within them, so it cannot be forgotten, ignored or suppressed.

Dear SR,
The decision to split the sixth demand, taken by those women with the greatest stamina at the National Conference, was shunted through under false pretences. To suggest that it was anti-lesbian to vote against splitting the demand was manipulative, divisive and *untrue*. I resented being told that my attempts to define my own sexuality are separate from my lesbianism, and felt oppressed and degraded as a lesbian by the whole excruciating bun fight.

Half an hour's discussion wasn't enough—we need to call a conference to discuss the split demand. Presumably I'm not the first to make this suggestion—meanwhile local women's groups could be sorting out what they feel ...
In sisterhood,
Pam Isherwood,
London.

Dear sisters,
The conference planning group would like to offer apologies to those women and groups of women who were unable to present their proposals to the plenary. We feel that these omissions are not unrelated to the debate which we would like to raise in the WLM about the role and organisation of the plenary.

At the time the problems inevitably seemed to be organisational—caught up as we all were in the mechanical aspects of the conference. In retrospect however we realise that these organisational problems reflect real political issues with implications for the movement as a whole especially as it is growing all the time.

Given the support that we received during and after the conference, it seems to us that there was an overall consensus about the need for a plenary. The plenary as we experienced it however raises the contradiction between the politics of the small group and the reality of 3,000 women trying to 'talk to each other' on a large number of issues in a limited space and time. We come into the plenary with our small group practices as our expected mode of operating but plenaries clearly need some other form. Because we have never developed other methods we fall back unhappily on pseudo-democratic male procedures which we are critical of and unfamiliar with—and which anyway can't be successfully ex-

tracted on their own from the framework in which they have been evolved.

We feel it is within that gap between recognising the need for some kind of structure in order to remain democratic (because of size and time) and the feminist principles which underlie the small group framework (no leadership, equal participation etc) that confusion arises. So it seems to us that there are a number of questions that we must all carefully think about and discuss:

a) How can we evolve a procedural form which both copes with the massive numbers but doesn't undercut some of the non-bureaucratic ways of organising which we value?

b) How do we get over the problem caused by the fact that the group organising the conference and the women responsible for the plenary are almost always the same group of women who inevitably have no space to acquire a sense of what the conference has been about?

c) How do we handle an agenda which attempts to deal with such diverse issues as adopting demands, showing support for particular groups of women, announcements etc. An agenda which in principle has no limits but which in reality is severely limited by time and energy and which above all can only be assembled a few hours beforehand?



d) How can we find a way round the fact that women are often confronted by and expected to vote in plenaries on issues which they have not previously considered.

The legacy of the oppressive and unsisterly plenary of 1978 will haunt the Birmingham sisters for a long time to come. We hope that by writing this letter and producing a post-conference document our experience will enable all of us to move forward and contribute towards a larger and more effective women's movement.
In sisterhood,
B'ham WL Conference Planning Group

Dear Spare Rib,
I feel extremely angry after reading a report of the conference in *The Guardian* (April 14). Since when have we used the straight press to give an annual report on the development of the movement? After our experiences with the media in the early 70s we must realise how the press distorts and trivialises the movement.

In my experience any communication with the press has been agreed upon by all sisters concerned to form a press statement. I was amazed, therefore, to find one woman using the media to give a personal account of the conference: a movement that considers spokeswomen

and leaders as regressive to our development.

It was bad enough to discover photographs and report of the conference on the same page as an article entitled 'All The World Loves A Wedding' but that a definition of radical and socialist feminism can be dismissed in one sentence is disgusting.

The very institution that reinforces the patriarchal values of capitalist society cannot be used to revive the movement. Part of our struggle is against the media. Are we not a revolutionary movement?

I hope that at the next conference we are all agreed on sisters not giving reports to the press.
In sisterhood,
Carol Jones,
Liverpool.

Therapy

Dear Spare Rib,
I have the feeling that Ms Jeffreys doesn't really grasp the depth or immensity of mental illness. When you're in a state where you can't recognise what a person is, you don't know where or why you are, you're living in fear and horror and pain, I fear the type of 'collective' therapy she talks about is detrimental. In my case, it was only too easy to lean on other people and push my craziness aside. When you become 'apart' from reality, depersonalised from yourself, the only way (I have found) to get back some semblance of order and become stronger is to go deep into yourself, face all those terrors and fight them yourself. It's your mind, only you can do it. With support, yes, but it's your battle.

"Is it really valuable or necessary that vast numbers of women should spend hours thinking about their dreams and fantasies ... when there's a vast war going on outside between men and women." The only way you're going to get to be a stronger, more capable person is by knowing yourself, your strengths and weaknesses. And doesn't she see that mental illness goes way way beyond dreams and fantasies. It is you, while you're feeling it.
Yours sincerely,
Linda M Baker,
Salford, Lancs.

Dear Spare Rib,
While I agree in general with Sheila Jeffrey's paper on therapy, it makes one or two points I should like to answer. She says "satisfaction should ... come from the transformation of depression and auto-destruction into outwardly directed aggression against the 'man' and his ways". And later "those qualities which make us revolutionaries—anger, hate, fear—are our strengths not our weaknesses". All of this is very male-oriented and rooted in the value assumptions of prick culture. Yes, it is therapeutic for women to be angry, and it can spur us to revolutionary action. But as we used to say in the old days "you can't build a non-violent society on a violent revolution".

In the same way a generation of women bred only to hate and anger, and focussed on their oppressor rather than on their shared potential, are far more likely to carry the politics of intimidation already rampant in the movement into the culture they create than they are likely to live out the politics of love, sharing and caring necessary to any truly democratic collective society.

In sisterhood,
Carol Lee,
Shepton Mallet,
Somerset.

Dear Spare Rib,
Just because most (and the best known) therapies are patriarchal and anti-revolutionary does not mean that all therapy is by definition useless or dangerous. Sheila Jeffreys lumps all kinds of therapy in together without examining their difference, and thereby shows a complete lack of information at least about co-counselling, the therapy I work with and know most about.

I am a lesbian feminist revolutionary. I am also a teacher of Re-Evaluation Counselling ('co-counselling'). I chose to become deeply involved in co-counselling, despite its sexism, *because* I am clear that spreading co-counselling is a major contribution to feminist revolution. Co-counselling works through a process of discharging our feelings (by laughing, crying, trembling, storming, yawning) so as to free more of our intelligence, which is 'shut down' by the painful emotion of both past and present hurts. To change society to the roots, we need to offer people a tool to change *themselves*—their values, feelings and behaviour—as well as changing the organised structures and institutions of the patriarchy. Otherwise we'll end up with patriarchal people, their ways of relating, thinking and acting unchanged, living among 'liberated' social structures—and that's not much of a revolution.

Good therapy is not about feeling 'totally happy and at ease' within the patriarchy. Its purpose is to free more of our intelligence and power so that we can act to end all oppression; and our experience in co-counselling is that liberating human intelligence, if successful and thorough, inevitably does make us want to change the world. Co-counselling theory states explicitly that no one can become free of distressful feelings until everybody is and that to become whole people we must not only counsel on our *feelings* about oppression but also act to end it. Co-counselling takes a clear position against oppression and definitely does *not* concentrate "on the individual rather than the collective experience".

An essential point of feminism is that we can discover the contradictions and oppression of the patriarchy in the pain and contradictions in our own lives. Thus through both consciousness-raising and therapy we can discover the roots of women's oppression by exploring our own feelings and experiences, precisely because the personal is deeply and intricately connected to the political. In denying the crucial nature of self-discovery to

FORUM

revolutionary feminist development, it is Sheila Jeffreys, not therapy, who is erroneously trying to isolate the personal from the political.
Sheila Rose,
Sevenoaks, Kent.

Dear sisters,
Sheila Jeffrey's article made me angry, not with men or society but with her attitudes. I'm sure that everyone is aware that therapy as an instrument to aid self-awareness, whether in groups or otherwise, happens on an individual level to the individual. It's also clear that there is not much room for introspection with 'revolutionaries'—there is somehow implicit in 'socialism' that there is a purity attached to thinking always of others and never about how the self is feeling. I think this is the Left's most amazing and frightening mistake.

We, as women, have never had the space and time to even be children, being forced at an early age to take on responsibility for others and to subordinate our own needs. At the same time as being child/adults we are expected to grow up into adult/children, being passive and dependent but also caring for numerous (it feels) others. The therapeutic relationship seeks, within the context of feminism, to explore these complicated relations of power and powerlessness, how it feels to be constantly up against authority (in this case the therapist) and whether or not it might be possible ever to have power and *not* misuse it as so many parents do. Here we can question and doubt that authority and explore our anger and power without being called castrating or manipulating. For me this has been revolutionising and *not* merely reforming. Is Sheila Jeffreys really pooh-poohing the idea that therapy might make a woman a better novelist or cook??—well why not if that's what *she* wants?

It would seem therapy is attracting more women than revolutionary politics which could be saying something about the coercive and evangelical techniques I associate with politics. After all, women have a right to choose the something they want and maybe they are choosing therapy because it's the *first* thing that's come along which gives them something for themselves—and *why not?* I get sick to the stomach of hearing how I shouldn't be so 'introspective'—why the fuck *not, for once?* Sincerely and in sisterhood,
Claire Betti,
London.



REVIEWS

THEATRE

WHORES D'OEUVRES

by Michelene Wandor

Omoro Theatre Company

There are just two actresses in the Omoro theatre company, Mo Holden and Rose Waddington. Their work up till now has centred mainly in schools and in the local community; this half-hour play is one of the first scripted works in which they have performed. A company formed of two actresses and a play written for two female characters sounds like a perfect fit, you would think. In fact, in performance, the two did not join with total ease.

Michelene Wandor's play uses the surreal device of two prostitutes shipwrecked and cast adrift on a raft on the Thames in order to force them into a situation where,

ROB HALL



—'Whores D'Oeuvres'

through argument, chat, joking and soliloquy they provide a many-stranded commentary on prostitution and on sexuality as it is currently lived by many people. The connections between sex, power and money are suggested, sometimes teased out, sometimes left hanging in the air. Is prostitution work, which should be protected by union conditions, or is it oppression which all right-minded people seek to abolish? Does it debase the prostitute or her client or both? Is marriage merely a politer name for prostitution?

These questions are worked through by a theatrical device which aims to reflect the way in which each of us is composed of contradictory and sometimes fragmented parts; the two actresses play several different roles each

(for example client, pimp, policeman), all of which are shown to be rooted in the prostitutes' own memories, fantasies and dreams. These scenes occur, criss-crossing with the 'real' scenes showing the two women coping with life on board the raft. The unconscious constantly enters this context too, as the women engage in verbal battles where jokes and slips of the tongue offer condensed and complicated meanings for the audience to unravel.

The ambitious and complex structure of this play, and the fitting of its dense contents into fifty minutes demanded a high level of acting for an audience to be able to carry away the full riches of its meaning. Unfortunately, this did not happen. The two actresses were unable to respond to what the text demanded of them. Despite their enthusiasm and energy in acting, they didn't sufficiently distinguish between the different parts and voices they were constantly swapping amongst, so that complicated parallels, links and themes sometimes got lost in each other or hopelessly confused.

Without seeing the play a second time, it's difficult to say how much of its specifically feminist meaning survives to convince an audience previously unfamiliar with its arguments as opposed to an audience already in sympathy with what it's suggesting. It's absurd that play-publishing is so unfashionable, since this play should not be lost after its tour, but would form an original and valuable addition to the tiny volume of feminist and socialist theatre published in this country. As a playwright, Michelene Wandor deserves that; it would be a great pity if people were to come away from this play dismissing the polemics of the play itself.

Michele Roberts

SCISSORS

by Michelene Wandor

Almost-Free Theatre,
London

The play opens deceptively simply on a London living room with an everyday story

of Jewish folk engaged in a barbed but affectionate family fencing match. There is Max Selby, retired East End tailor and pattern cutter, Miriam Selby, bullied but unbowed, and their educated daughter Norma, home on a visit.

Having offered us a selection of Jewish stereotypes, Michelene Wandor demonstrates how they are constructed. She uses the witty, irreverent repartee, familiar from her previous plays, to throw up the intricate personal, political and cultural contradictions facing Jews in Britain today. The subject is treated violently, with none of the sentimentality it tends to evoke—yet with sympathy.

There is a danger in dealing with stereotypes that the characters will not illuminate or subvert the caricature. And when *Scissors* was premiered in April as part of Inter-Action's 'Rights and Campaigns' season this happened with Joshua, the young Israeli sent to be educated in England "because Israel isn't religious enough". The combination of the role and the acting produced slapstick. On the other hand, the conflicts facing Norma, the socialist daughter, are subtly conveyed. Reared on memories of the Nazi holocaust and East End Jewish history, knowing that her son is called Yid at school, aware that fascist anti-semitism is on the increase, she nevertheless feels highly critical of the patriarchal nature of Judaism, of Israel and of her parents' politics and their idealisation of Jewishness.

Ambivalence—a clash of gut reaction and intellect—is also suggested by her relations with her parents. Although she tends to side with her mother and fight with her father, she seems to feel greater affinity with his brand of irony and aggression than with her mother's practical but limited outlook.

Internal conflict takes place against a background of violent external events affecting the family—a hijacking, an assault at a fascist rally, and a letter from a sister believed to have been killed by the Nazis. The pace is fast, the contradictions bewildering and it is well worth reading the script at leisure. *Scissors* and *Whores*

D'Oeuvres are now available from: Michelene Wandor, 71 Belsize Lane, London NW3 inc. SAE (20p in stamps each) Rozsika Parker

BOOKS

FOR COLORED GIRLS

Who Have Considered

Suicide When The Rainbow

Is Enuof

by Ntozake Shange

(Eyre Methuen £3.95

hardback; £1.50 paperback)

After some years of being a closet feminist, I decided, not long ago, that it was time to 'come out'. I am still discovering and adapting to the implications of that decision.

In that respect, Ntozake Shange's work speaks to me as a black woman, and, to some extent, reinforces my feelings about the rightness of my decision.

Ms Shange's choreopoem (a series of poems, which has been done as a play in New York, with dance and music) embraces themes common to all women. Rape, abortion, broken relationships, growing up and out, are all honestly and sensitively explored. Her poem 'latent rapist', which emphasises that rapists are more often than not people we know, is particularly compelling.

Shange has allowed herself a free reign with the language (as evidenced by the book's title), which at times obscures, but more often refreshingly illuminates, her points.

The added bonus for me is that, as it's told from a black perspective, I read her poems, written in the dialect of my culture, and felt, "That's me; those are my experiences; I've felt the same things."

While I realise that one of the ultimate aims of the women's movement is to unite all women in sisterhood, I feel that such a coming together is strengthened if the individual components have sound bases from which to emerge. *For colored girls* goes a long way towards providing that base for black women.

Melba Wilson

TEARING THE VEIL:

Essays in Femininity

Edited by Susan Lipshitz

(Routledge and Kegan Paul

£2.95)

m/f Number 1

(£1.20)

Tearing the Veil is the most recent of the surprisingly few collections of essays to have emerged from the women's

movement. The book is divided into two parts. In the first section, three articles—on maternity, witchcraft and prostitution—adopt a psychoanalytic approach to explore the issues they raise for female sexuality. This proves compelling in Dana Breen's examination of the contradictions between hospital routine and the hopes and fears produced by pregnancy and childbirth, and in Susan Lipshitz's investigation of the link between witchcraft, sterility and menopause. However, Katherine Arnold, who explores a brothel entirely in terms of the fantasies of its occupants and their clients demonstrates the weakness which total reliance on psychoanalytic ideas when looking at social institutions can bring.

The second half, a further three essays, is more disparate, unified neither by methodology nor by content. Mary Jacobus uses close textual analysis to demonstrate Hardy's rewriting of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* in conformity and conflict with dominant sexual mores, and thus the interplay of internal and external censorship in the construction of a 'pure' heroine. Mandy Merck makes a case for the Athenian creation of the Amazon myth as a form of reinforcement of patriarchal rule, and Barbara Taylor offers a fascinating study of the impact of Joanna Southcott's heresy on an Owenite movement already open to the notion of a female prophet through its contact with the Saint-Simonians. What holds the contributions together is a shared interest in the power of female sexuality and the desire to censor, contain or channel it: hence *Tess*, from being an initiator, becomes a victim; patriarchal politics demands victory, even fictive, over the feminine; the desires and needs of mother and child are subordinated to a hierarchised hospital order.

The predominance given to psychoanalytic accounts marks *Tearing the Veil* as belonging to that tendency in the women's movement which has turned to psychoanalysis, structural anthropology and linguistics for theoretical insights, a tendency first articulated by Juliet Mitchell in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*. *m/f* locates itself more firmly on the same terrain. The most successfully argued article in its first issue, by Elizabeth Cowie, picks up the Levi-Straussian conception of woman as sign and the exchange of women as communication between men as applied by Juliet Mitchell and by Claire Johnstone (in her analysis of women in

film) and subjects their work to a useful critical examination. In the same issue, Michele Montrelay's 'Inquiry into Femininity' opens up a polemic with those feminists (for example, Luce Irigaray, recently published in *Ideology and Consciousness*) who would place 'the truth' of female sexuality in the girl's early attachment to her mother and therefore outside relations with male sexuality.



Although psychoanalysis is certainly not what *m/f* is all about, it is at the moment the only journal of the women's movement which might allow some of the problems raised for feminism by psychoanalysis to be argued through. *m/f*, like *Tearing the Veil*, bears the imprint, however, of the specific history Freudian theory has had so far in English feminism. In Paris and Milan, for example, feminist groups were formed which combined the theory and practice of psychoanalysis with consciousness-raising and feminist practice. This is partly because radical culture was diffuse enough there to produce a 'left section' of the psychoanalytic movement. In England psychoanalysis has more readily produced study groups than an active relationship to practice. Freud and Lacan have been more valued

for their theoretical insights than for anything else and there is, in consequence, a dearth of feminist accounts of clinical practice or of the experience of creating a 'politics of the unconscious'. A tendency to over-theorise or to engage in internal dialogue with an already constituted theory is perhaps a by-product of this history, and it can easily be mistaken for obscurantism. To take on the project of producing a theoretical journal of feminism, as the group that produces *m/f* has done, is an act of courage. If they can go on to create a space for dialogue they will be filling an oft-lamented gap.

Rosalind Delmar

LOVE AND FREINDSHIP

and other early works

by Jane Austen

(The Women's Press

£1.25)

Jane Austen is hardly a forgotten writer, but this collection of early works, written before she was seventeen, has not been easily accessible before.

'Love and Freindship' is a witty and scathing parody of sentimental fiction and manners of the eighteenth century, put into its literary context in a good introduction by Geraldine Killalea. The political context is more doubtful. To see Jane Austen as an early feminist because of her recognition of the economics of marriage seems to me to ignore her conservatism and strict idea of duty, and also to fail to appreciate that at that time the contractual elements of marriage were not so covered with romance as they are now.

'The History of England' and 'The Three Sisters' are also clever and funny though I didn't much enjoy the other 'works', but my main criticism is that this publication is marginal to our understanding both of Jane Austen and of

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women's position. It seems an odd and not very brave choice for the Women's Press.

Katherine Gieve

WOMAN'S BODY, WOMAN'S RIGHT

*A Social History
of Birth Control
in America*

by Linda Gordon
(Penguin £1.50)

While specific to the USA, Linda Gordon's book engages more generally with the ways in which female sexuality has been defined by patriarchal ideology. Whatever their historical limitations feminist birth control movements consistently threatened dominant notions of femininity by asserting women's right to control reproduction, although they were often influenced by eugenicist arguments. The author analyses the reasons for these confusions and chronicles Margaret Sanger's career from revolutionary to conservative.

The evidence that there has been no scarcity of birth control technology in the past, but rather a suppression of it, is well documented as is women's refusal to see sex and reproduction as inseparable. Linda Gordon concludes that it is only in the context of a total programme for liberation that the issue of birth control can be instrumental in changing power relations... that rape, equal pay, sexism in education, a woman's right to choose and other struggles are all linked. This 500 page history illuminates some of the questions raised in our continuing fight for sexual self-determination.

Liz Heron

BOOKS Children's

DOMINIC

by Mary White
(Methuen £3.95)

Children's book parents and their relationships with their children get better all the time—from the remote authority figures glimpsed in the kids' books of the fifties, they moved to human-after-all Mum and Dad of the sixties, then to the all-too-human (alcoholic, divorced, kleptomaniac) parent of the seventies.

In Mary White's *Dominic* the parent and parent-child



relationship is further explored and—refreshingly—in a way that the new generation of children brought up by socially aware parents will be able to recognise.

Twelve-year-old, deschooled Dominic lives in a Sydney suburb with Meg, his sculptor mother. Their close and warm relationship is pleasantly described. A traumatic series of events shatters the calm but not the relationship in which Dominic grows in responsibility and understanding.

Meg has autonomy, strength, and is yet a fallible, human parent. In this rare children's book portrait of a liberated woman, White is not uncritical—we see how Meg's middle classness isolates her from her traditional working class neighbours. But for Dominic, such contradictions will be seen as one of the challenges of the social change of which he is already a part. For 12 years and upwards.

Rosemary Stones
Children's Rights Workshop

HANNAH'S GREAT DECISION

by Charlotte Firmin
(Macmillan £3.25)

Unusual modern parents are also the feature of this new hardback picture book. Here both parents are famous pop stars whose trendy lifestyle, big house and pink Rolls Royce bore daughter Hannah and make her unhappy. "She hated the all-night parties... she never saw any children." But she is resourceful and independent-minded and makes her 'Great Decision'—not to accompany them on their next USA concert tour but rather to stay with Aunt Maud who lives in the country and runs her own garage.

Here Hannah goes to school, makes friends and learns to service motorbikes. And it's to this rural haven that her parents eventually drop out—to start a new life as village postman and shopkeeper. Other farfetched details of this modern moral tale include their pink clad chauffeur and Auntie Maud getting married. But this

humorous book has some good non-sexist touches and is sure to appeal to today's 5-8 year olds.

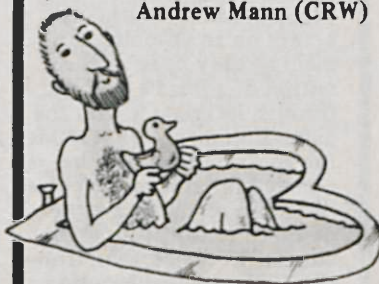
HOUSEHOLD MACHINES

by Althea Braithwaite

Illustrated by John Lobban
and R A Sherrington
(Puffin 60p)

Some recent information books for children show an awareness of sexism and/or an attempt to redress the balance in sex role portrayal. Written by Althea Braithwaite, best known for her 'Dinosaur' books, *Household Machines* are described as they're used by different members of the family, for example Mum painting, Dad filling the kettle, son vacuuming. The workings of taps, electric kettles and so on are clearly explained as are the sources of power. But it seems the illustrators (and editors) are not as committed as Althea. Why, for example, is Dad not shown using the washing machine and hanging the washing on the line as described in the text? And there seems no excuse for showing the Dad stuck in the sitting room reading the newspaper in the two family situations portrayed at the end of the book. Half a step forward perhaps. For 6-8 year olds.

Andrew Mann (CRW)



FILMS

LOOKING FOR MR GOODBAR

by Judith Rossner

(Coronet Books 95p)

Film by Richard Brooks

ABC General release (X)

Theresa Dunn (played by Diane Keaton), a New York teacher, picks up a man in a singles bar, fucks him and is murdered by him. This is a murder story, but curiously the story of the person who is murdered and not the murderer, as though that story might somehow explain the crime. This looks like a typical chauvinist explanation of rape, specially as the heroine is sexually independent, she acknowledges her desires and seeks to satisfy them in ways that are not socially acceptable for

women. In the day time she is a respectable teacher, but at night she goes to bars, picks up men, sleeps with them, mostly does not see them again, but if she does, they are kept outside her day-time life. Certainly there is a suggestion that she destroys herself.

So is it a morality story? This is the view taken of the film in *Time Out*: "beneath the apparent sexual frankness lurks the familiar spectre of moral puritanism"; but not the view of *Women's Voice* who see it as an indictment of a male society where a woman can't be alone and independent without putting herself at risk.

Both views are possible interpretations of the film but neither would comprehend the complexity of the book. Though the facts of the film closely resemble those of the book, the central point of the book, Theresa's attitude towards herself, is missing. The film presents her ready-made 'a sexually liberated woman'; there is little impression of her own sense of alienation... "she didn't feel she had a life, one life that is, belonging to a person Theresa Dunn. There was Miss Dunn who taught a bunch of children who adored her and there was someone named Terry who whored around in bars when she couldn't sleep at night." So a fascinating book is turned into a bleak and empty film by making things much less complicated than they really are. The film maker has manipulated the idea of the book and has limited the image of the woman to satisfy commercial requirements. The violent ending seems just another necessary ingredient of a 'successful' film. Judith Rossner starts with the confession of the murderer, her book is an enquiry and not a thriller. Why did Brooks turn it round?

The film makes nothing of Theresa's relationship with James, the nice boy in her life, who challenges the division between day and night. He wants to marry her, she loves him but he doesn't turn her on... "something there was that couldn't be interested in a man who liked powerful intelligent women". I understand her dislike of marriage, her fear of being possessed by him "the look of love threatened to devour her if she ever gave into it"... but when she talks of the women's group which would support her in being independent of men it doesn't sound right. She is independent of the women's group, just as she is indepen-

dent of men, she can't stand closeness and tenderness. She seeks out men as they have traditionally sought out women: "she wanted a man, but didn't want to get terribly involved, she found a man and got laid". But paradoxically despite her independence her desires are created and limited by stereotypes. She sought out men not to use them but to be used by them: "she felt as if she had acquiesced in her own rape".

It's impossible to draw straightforward political or moral conclusions about the book, as Judith Rossner has created a convincing individual with familiar anxieties and ambiguities which are difficult enough to judge in oneself let alone in someone else.

Katherine Gieve



Don't worry, all is resolved in laughter and kisses

THE TURNING POINT

Directed by Herbert Ross

20th Century Fox

Hot on the heels of *Julia* comes the latest film by men for women, Deedee (Shirley MacLaine) who has given up the ballet for marriage, motherhood and teaching, and Emma (Anne Bancroft) who has foregone the satisfactions of love and family in order to pursue her career to Pavlova-like heights.

In the first scene we're shown Deedee, plump and dowdy, limping symbolically through her Midwest suburban home, searching among a clutter of children's clothes for a lost evening shoe. Emma's ballet company is touring the provinces and Deedee is preparing for a reunion with her friend. At the performance Deedee cries for her lost opportunities while at the party afterwards Emma holds court, all poise and spareness and grace, and the first sparks of enmity show through Deedee's nostalgia for the days when she and Emma were both rising stars in the running for the one

coveted part.

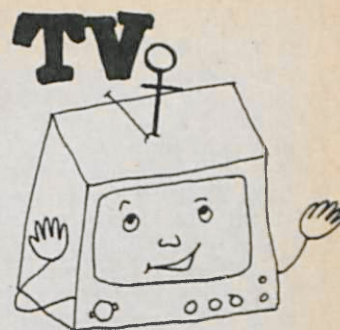
Deedee's talented daughter Emilia (Leslie Browne) takes classes with the company and is offered a place with them. Deedee moves to New York for the summer, ostensibly to be with Emilia at the start of her career, and finds herself in the unrewarding role of mother-chaperone on the fringes of the ebullient, bitchy, frenetic ballet company. While Emilia's youthful brilliance is being schooled we're given glimpses of Emma's predicament; as an ageing prima ballerina she is beginning to lose the plum classical roles to dancers who have the requisite youthful looks and stamina, and when a new ballet is choreographed she realises that it isn't being created with her in mind, but

another dimension of anxiety to Deedee's mixed feelings of competitiveness and pride in her daughter's development. At this point much is made of the business of women having to choose: Deedee has chosen family; Emma has chosen the lonely pathways of art; will Emilia choose Emma as a role model or will she get pregnant and jeopardise her career as Deedee did? (In fact Yuri flits off with someone else, solving the problem for the moment and giving an excuse for a funny scene where Emilia, who has been drowning her sorrows, is shoved onstage by Emma half-way through *Giselle*, and dances a hopelessly tipsy sylph.) But essentially the film tiptoes around all the important issues of why we're forced to make those 'choices' in the first place, why competitiveness between women goes so deep, and why mothers are ambivalent towards their daughters' independent achievements, characterising them instead as timeless dilemmas of womanhood.

At the climax of the film Deedee and Emma fight out their accumulated jealousies and frustrations in an orgy of fists and flying handbags, and all is resolved in laughter and kisses, with both women accepting their different lives in a way which I think we're supposed to see as mature. It was certainly far too cosy for me. Deedee stops devaluing herself and her family life and Emma resigns herself to coaching the prima ballerina of the future.

Together in the wings—all of 45—the two of them watch Emilia coming into her own as a star, and graciously accept that other universal dilemma, the onset of old age. About which I'd like to comment that Dame Marie Rambert executed thirty-two exuberant cartwheels every day after practice till her seventieth birthday, and would no doubt have continued if her husband hadn't told her it was time to observe certain laws of gravity.

Alison Fell



A WOMAN'S PLACE?

BBC2 Tuesday evenings

at 7.30pm between May 2nd and June 20th.

This series of four plays and four documentary films aims to "look behind the ideas of women's liberation and the as yet superficial impact of our new sex equality laws to assess the reality of where women have got to in their own estimation and experience".

Fact and fiction collide in *Leila* a play by Francis McNeil and *A Man's World*, a documentary produced by Suzanne Davies. Both deal with the obstacles facing women who are entering spheres of work dominated by men. Leila, a rather unlikely working-class woman played by Sharon Duce, decides to retrain as a skilled mechanic. She meets hostility and disapproval from her husband to start with but the initial tension too soon subsides into a sulky acceptance. He even takes over some of the housework without any sign of struggle! At the training centre all is idyllic. She immediately teams up with a man on her course who not only shows no signs of hostility when she turns out to be better than him but undertakes to teach her to drive so that she has a better chance of finding work. This device allows for a touching romantic interlude as they kiss shyly over the gear shift.

The play seemed even more absurd seen in con-

that the role is more suited to her admiring protegee, Emilia.

This part of the film is like a balletomane's Ascot, with a Gala Performance in which some beautiful old pas-de-deux are gruesomely intercut, and Mikhail's Baryshnikov (as Yuri, the archetypal Russian bursting with virility and perfect elevation) gets a chance to show that he really is a very classy dancer, when he flies round the stage in *Le Corsaire*.

Emilia embarks on an affair with Yuri, which adds

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junction with the documentary. We are introduced to an 18-year-old apprentice painter and decorator with a pragmatic approach to her work; 'I've found men always say it's weird for a woman to be a painter and decorator. I say... your wife does it at home, why can't she do it for a job?', who faces downright patronage from her fellow apprentices. The rest of the film looks at women in a variety of traditionally 'male' jobs with linking remarks from Esther Saraga calmly debunking the myths about female capabilities.

The film could have been a real downer, dealing as it had to with the very real difficulties women face in breaking out of their traditional roles. But, it isn't, and that is largely because the strength, determination and pleasure in their work really shows through. For me, the high point was Sylvia Greenwood, a Transport and General Workers' convenor. It does you good to watch a room full of male shop stewards listening with rapt attention to a woman explaining the intricacies of pay policy.

If the rest of the films turn out to be as good as this one (to be shown on May 30th)—watch them. With encouragement, the Beeb might also be persuaded to make prints of them for showing in schools and colleges.

Angela Phillips

YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN ALL THE WORDS THAT HAD TO BE OUT OF THIS ISSUE, AND IT'S STILL STUFFED. WATCH OUT FOR NEXT MONTH'S FABULOUS VISUAL ISSUE, WITH LOTS OF LOVELY PICS.



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MUSIC



VAL WILMER

FIRST WOMEN'S JAZZ FESTIVAL

Kansas City, Missouri, USA, birthplace of the iconoclastic saxophonist Charlie Parker and vital forcing-house for the era of jazz epitomised by Count Basie, was the site of the first ever Women's Jazz Festival. Back in March, singer/song-writer Carol Comer and Dianne Gregg, a local disc-jockey, made history for more than the obvious reason when they organised three days of women's music there. American music festivals, jazz in particular, rarely make money and seldom break even, yet these two women, armed with the belief that women had contributed more to jazz than had ever been acknowledged as well as the feeling that, to paraphrase Charlie Parker, "Now's the Time", managed to persuade the National Endowment for the Arts to cough up a cool 10,000 dollars in support of their project. The result? The festival made money and is assured of a return next year.

How ironic, then, that what should have been the ultimate showcase for the many talented women who have been systematically excluded and overlooked by male entrepreneurs and the media, should have turned into an almost defiantly anti-feminist exercise.

Mary Lou Williams, who has often been regarded as

'the' pianist in the transition from swing to bebop that occurred in the early '40s, is one of the few women musicians who has never been under-estimated by her male counterparts. Nevertheless, she saw fit to protest to Hollywood journalist, Marie Chun: "I've been with men all my life and I feel like a man. It never bothered me one way or the other because we have some great women playing. What has happened in this era is that they want to be greater than men. Nobody can do what they have to do unless they do what they have to do, build their talent and perfect it. I suffered like another man with Andy Kirk's Clouds of Joy (a noted big band in the 1930s). I've gone thirty days without eating. I ate nothing but corn out of a cornfield where I was. We had no heaters in the car, but I travelled with him because my whole thing was the music. I never had any static about being a woman; everybody was willing to help me."

The invited women who stayed away included pianist Patrice Rushen and Vi Redd, a funky, blues-drenched saxophonist and singer. These players reasoned that, as they had proved their ability to hold their own with men, why should they settle for less than the best? To them, a Women's Jazz Festival was just another ghetto in a life full of struggle.

Mary Lou Williams... "I never had any static about being a woman; everybody was willing to help me"

Despite the conflicting politics surrounding the festival—at one point local feminists planned to stage a demonstration in protest at the number of male players involved—the three days of music did, ultimately, make some kind of positive gesture towards women's liberation. The fact that players like guitarist Mary Osborne, pianist Marian McPartland and bassist Lynn Milano drew totally objective praise from the critical establishment was useful. McPartland herself, British-born and a veteran of many a musical era, was one of the driving forces behind the festival, bringing her energy to bear on publicity and administration as well as playing the music. Nevertheless, it is a sad reflection on the inherent chauvinism in this particular area of music that the Japanese pianist Toshika, who wrote compositions and arrangements for a 16-piece line-up, should not have considered using female musicians. It was against this that feminists demonstrated, despite her insistence that, "If it were not for my music and my arrangements, the band would not be in existence." Where women are concerned, attitudes in the jazz world remain for the moment at least, pretty impenetrable.

Val Wilmer



PLASTIC LETTERS

Blondie

(Chrysalis)

Remember the Shangrilas? 'Leader of the Pack', 'Walk-in the Rain'?

On first listening, Blondie's second album feels like a return to those Golden Years—it's basically a mixture of mid-sixties heart'n'soul, late-sixties acid (remember Jefferson Airplane?), injected with some seventies sounds.

Lead singer, Deborah Harry, exploits a Bardot/Monroe style sex-appeal against a black leather backdrop of cardboard studs: Debbie Harry is Blondie. She sings, with slick control, songs like 'No Imagination':

*All is fair in love and war
So I don't want your love
no more . . .
... You're fragile and you're
very green
Conditioned by a milk
machine
Got no imagination
Got no imagination
naaaaaaaaaa . . .
Take a walk kid*

And she's picked up some precise intonations from the American Moderns—it sounds like Patti Smith and Lou Reed were among the musicians she admired in her groupie days. Gone is the 'passion' of the Shangrilas, these songs have an aggressive edge. But despite a few good numbers you get that droney feeling after both sides of *Plastic Letters*—it's New Wave Mechanical.

I'd like to see Debbie Harry take up a front-line position with the Ronettes, leaving Blondie behind.

Laura Margolis

PATTI SMITH

In concert—Rainbow Theatre, London, plus her new album **EASTER** (Arista)

Patti Smith's music has been with us now for three years. First *Horses*—and what an innovation that turned out to be! The two subsequent albums couldn't have the same impact; she can't be so stunningly different more than once. *Radio Ethiopia* last year and now *Easter* are more like afterthoughts than progression.

Her London concert was

mostly material from *Easter*. After the obligatory delay she made a breathtaking opening—appearing suddenly from blackness, backlit by a super-powerful spotlight, presenting a silver and black cruciform silhouette. And straight into 'Set Me Free', the title song from the movie *Privilege*—not coincidentally about the problems of being a Rock Messiah. The Rainbow sound was excellent and the band (four men) could stand alone, but the identity is The Patti Smith Group and no mistake! They kept things in sequence, started songs off so she could be reminded of where she was . . . then she would step forward and they'd resume their place. Scurrying Gormenghast figures kept her plugged into or out of guitars as the need arose. Some of her explorations are, maybe, a tiny bit excessive—as she got more and more out of her brains the guitar-as-source-of-sound technique became somewhat repetitive. But it can be forgiven in context.

Her presence is total—she controls the band, the crowd, the world. I started off feeling vaguely alienated, unaccepting of star performances, being more used to the accessibility of Women's Liberation music/events. But as the show went on it became obvious why she has to be separate—the illusion wouldn't work if she was one of us. She finished with the superb 'Gloria' of old and got total deserved adulation. Then came back with two amazing encores—'Jailhouse Rock' and 'Horses', and 'My Generation', ending only when she'd done in all the guitar strings within reach.

She's now obviously getting more promotion and is in the bizarre field of having a hit single—the not-very-representative 'Because the Night', co-written with Bruce Springsteen (last year's Future of Rock'n'Roll—remember?). Those in the know will already have heard *Easter*—those who haven't heard her yet should start with *Horses* as it is unsurpassable. . . So far.

Pam Isherwood



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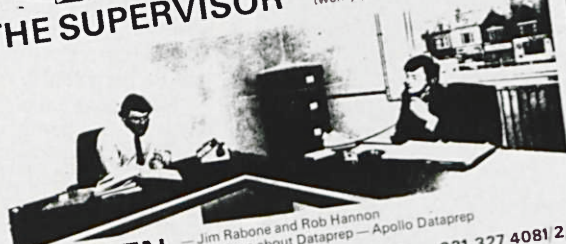
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Thanks to Socialist Challenge

That night neighbours found her dead in the kitchen.

Mr Price said McEvoy had made a cruelly vicious and murderous attack on his wife.

Mr Gerald Crowe, QC, defending, said that McEvoy's wife taunted him "The pity of the matter is that the taunting came when the hammer was in his hand. Otherwise it might have been just one of those trivial incidents one hears about in the divorce courts where the husband is provoked and only hits his wife," he said.

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The Independent Broadcasting Authority, for ITV ads and programmes, 70 Brompton Road, London SW9. The Advertising Standards Authority, though notoriously unresponsive to complaints about sexism, 15 Ridgmount Street, London WC1.

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Dear Spare Rib,
Enclosed is cutting from Liverpool Echo. As a member of a local Women's Aid group, this comment sickened me.
Yours
Daween O'Leary

AND NAIL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

FIVE WOMEN

Isobel fed the birds. The neighbour's dog was not turned away. When her illness made all chores a burden, she worried anxiously that there would not be enough food in the house, she stocked the refrigerator with ten pounds of butter, five dozen eggs, twenty packets of suet. When visitors were expected she planned obsessively what they would eat, seeing them as appetites that must be fed, a monstrous image of an insatiable world demanding food from her, demanding shelter.

I listen to the latest unemployment figures on the late night news. Sleep princess, the wicked fairy counsels, sleep now for we have no need of you this next hundred years.

Catherine's statement to the United Nations is filed away under "Treatment of Political Prisoners in South Africa".

So five women died, five women who did not know each other, but whom I knew. Their blood spills out unheeded on the dark streets, runs down the walls of banks, spreads across the billboards, creeps up the lift shafts in the tall buildings. I meet a woman who gets up at 4am to clean the offices of the National Coal Board. She earns so little that the Welfare Department pays her rent. The reality is nothing like they told us. So Sandra puts on her black dress in her painted room, she sleeps through the noise of the city and dreams into that nightmare dream.

I take Isobel's ashes back to Africa to the place where she spent her childhood. They are in my baggage in a small silver cigarette box, tied up with a piece of string. At various places on my journey, I stop for a few days. I unpack the silver case and look at it.

I am an authority on funerals.

Father O'Riley teeters on tiny feet, the river far below us reflects the mountains ten miles away. We are no pagans, he says, praying to his almighty before scattering Isobel's ashes over the precipice. The banks of the river are covered knee-high in grass. She had wanted to end her days in the

house we can see standing peacefully in the bend of the river, but her husband had not wished to return.

I weep uncontrollably.

You five women, it is no wonder I keep on expanding your number as I hear of yet another death. Today I read in a newspaper that a young mother has thrown herself out of the window of her high-rise flat. The frieze seems never-ending; the women stand gracefully, silently, even inconspicuously, their hands hold loaves of bread, bunches of flowers, cradles or bundles of washing. They stand over sick beds, over stoves, over clean laundry, over blood-stained sheets.

No, I say to myself. I am a dumpy figure weighed down by two heavy shopping bags. I angle my body homewards against gale-force winds. No, that is not right. I will give meaning to these deaths, but the image I have is too timid, too static, too graceful. Underneath all this litany of names lies my own guilt; I feel guilty that I am still alive, that I am not in that prison cell, on that roof, that I did not put on my black dress in a ritual of death. I have elevated them to sainthood so that I can prostrate myself before them, light candles of words to their memory, bury their raw pain in sentimental pictures.

I feel insensitive that there is still fight left in me, that I find pleasure in the company of other women, that the wild flowers growing in each season bring me joy. The blue hyacinth in the pot on my table unfolds a new bloom each day. When they are all open there is one miraculous flower. I do not feel isolated, will fight in the company of others, will not be silent, but I will light no more candles. Monuments are for the dead we bury. I say the names over again, this time not like a litany, but like a battle-cry; Sandra, Lee, Pauline, Isobel, Catherine, my sisters, it is not amazing that you chose to die, it is amazing that other women are still alive, that we survive. I will remember you now, not weeping, with my pain turning not into guilt, but into clear, high anger. ●

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